

The Parisians, Book 11.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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THE PARISIANS

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

Among the frets and checks to the course that "never did run smooth," there is one which is sufficiently frequent, for many a reader will remember the irritation it caused him. You have counted on a meeting with the beloved one unwitnessed by others, an interchange of confessions and vows which others may not hear. You have arranged almost the words in which your innermost heart is to be expressed; pictured to yourself the very looks by which those words will have their sweetest reply. The scene you have thus imagined appears to you vivid and distinct, as if foreshown in a magic glass. And suddenly, after long absence, the meeting takes place in the midst of a common companionship: nothing that you wished to say can be said. The scene you pictured is painted out by the irony of Chance; and groups and backgrounds of which you had never dreamed start forth from the disappointing canvas. Happy if that be all! But sometimes, by a strange, subtle intuition, you feel that the person herself is changed; and sympathetic with that change, a terrible chill comes over your own heart.

Before Graham had taken his seat at the table beside Isaura, he felt that she was changed to him. He felt it by her very touch as their hands met at the first greeting,--by the tone of her voice in the few words that passed between them,--by the absence of all glow in the smile which had once lit up her face, as a burst of sunshine lights up a day in spring, and gives a richer gladness of colour to all its blooms. Once seated side by side they remained for some moments silent. Indeed, it would have been rather difficult for anything less than the wonderful intelligence of lovers between whom no wall can prevent the stolen interchange of tokens, to have ventured private talk of their own amid the excited converse which seemed all eyes, all tongues, all ears, admitting no one present to abstract himself from the common emotion. Englishmen do not recognise the old classic law which limited the number of guests, where banquets are meant to be pleasant, to that of the Nine-Muses. They invite guests so numerous, and so shy of launching talk across the table, that you may talk to the person next to you not less secure from listeners than you would be in talking with the stranger whom you met at a well in the Sahara. It is not so, except on state occasions, at Paris. Difficult there to retire into solitude with your next neighbour. The guests collected by Duplessis completed with himself the number of the Sacred Nine--the host, Valerie, Rochebriant, Graham, Isaura, Signora Venosta, La Duchesse de Tarascon, the wealthy and high-born Imperialist, Prince -----, and last and least, one who shall be nameless.

I have read somewhere, perhaps in one of the books which American superstition dedicates to the mysteries of Spiritualism, how a gifted seer, technically styled medium, sees at the opera a box which to other eyes appears untenanted and empty, but to him is full of ghosts, well

dressed in *costume de-regle*, gazing on the boards and listening to the music. Like such ghosts are certain beings whom I call Lookers-on. Though still living, they have no share in the life they survey, they come as from another world to hear and to see what is passing in ours. In ours they lived once, but that troubled sort of life they have survived. Still we amuse them as stage-players and puppets amuse ourselves. One of these Lookers-on completed the party at the house of Duplessis.

How lively, how animated the talk was at the financier's pleasant table that day, the 8th of July! The excitement of the coming war made itself loud in every Gallic voice, and kindled in every Gallic eye. Appeals at every second minute were made, sometimes courteous, sometimes sarcastic, to the Englishman--promising son of an eminent statesman, and native of a country in which France is always coveting an ally, and always suspecting an enemy. Certainly Graham could not have found a less propitious moment for asking Isaura if she really were changed. And certainly the honour of Great Britain was never less ably represented (that is saying a great deal) than it was on this occasion by the young man reared to diplomacy and aspiring to Parliamentary distinction. He answered all questions with a constrained voice and an insipid smile,--all questions pointedly addressed to him as to what demonstrations of admiring sympathy with the gallantry of France might be expected from the English Government and people; what his acquaintance with the German races led him to suppose would be the effect on the Southern States of the first defeat of the Prussians; whether the man called Moltke was not a mere strategist on paper, a crotchety pedant; whether, if Belgium became so enamoured of the glories of France as to solicit fusion with her people, England would have a right to offer any objection, &c., &c. I do not think that during that festival Graham once thought one-millionth so much about the fates of Prussia and France as he did think, "Why is that girl so changed to me? Merciful heaven! is she lost to my life?"

By training, by habit, even by passion, the man was a genuine politician, cosmopolitan as well as patriotic, accustomed to consider what effect every vibration in that balance of European power, which no deep thinker can despise, must have on the destinies of civilised humanity, and on those of the nation to which he belongs. But are there not moments in life when the human heart suddenly narrows the circumference to which its emotions are extended? As the ebb of a tide, it retreats from the shores it had covered on its flow, drawing on with contracted waves the treasure-trove it has selected to hoard amid its deeps.

CHAPTER II.

On quitting the dining-room, the Duchesse de Tarascon said to her host, on whose arm she was leaning, "Of course you and I must go with the stream. But is not all the fine talk that has passed to-day at your table, and in which we too have joined, a sort of hypocrisy? I may say this to you; I would say it to no other."

"And I say to you, Madame la Duchesse, that which I would say to no other. Thinking over it as I sit alone, I find myself making a 'terrible hazard;' but when I go abroad and become infected by the general enthusiasm, I pluck up gaiety of spirit, and whisper to myself, 'True, but it may be an enormous gain.' To get the left bank of the Rhine is a

trifle; but to check in our next neighbour a growth which a few years hence would overtop us,—that is no trifle. And, be the gain worth the hazard or not, could the Emperor, could any Government likely to hold its own for a week, have declined to take the chance of the die?"

The Duchesse mused a moment, and meanwhile the two seated themselves on a divan in the corner of the salon. Then she said very slowly—

"No Government that held its tenure on popular suffrage could have done so. But if the Emperor had retained the personal authority which once allowed the intellect of one man to control and direct the passions of many, I think the war would have been averted. I have reason to know that the Emperor gave his emphatic support to the least bellicose members of the Council, and that Gramont's speech did not contain the passage that precipitates hostilities when the Council in which it was framed broke up. These fatal Ministers found the Chamber, and the reports of the popular excitement which could not be resisted without imminent danger of revolution. It is Paris that has forced the war on the Emperor. But enough of this subject. What must be, must, and, as you say, the gain may be greater than the hazard. I come to something else you whispered to me before we went in to dinner,—a sort of complaint which wounds me sensibly. You say I had assisted to a choice of danger and possibly of death a very distant connection of mine, who might have been a very near connection of yours. You mean Alain de Rochebriant?"

"Yes; I accept him as a suitor for the hand of my only daughter."

"I am so glad, not for your sake so much as for his. No one can know him well without appreciating in him the finest qualities of the finest order of the French noble; but having known your pretty Valerie so long, my congratulations are for the man who can win her. Meanwhile, hear my explanation: when I promised Alain any interest I can command for the grade of officer in a regiment of Mobs, I knew not that he had formed, or was likely to form, ties or duties to keep him at home. I withdraw my promise."

"No, Duchesse, fulfil it. I should be disloyal indeed if I robbed a sovereign under whose tranquil and prosperous reign I have acquired, with no dishonour, the fortune which Order proffers to Commerce, of one gallant defender in the hour of need. And, speaking frankly, if Alain were really my son, I think I am Frenchman enough to remember that France is my mother."

"Say no more, my friend—say no more," cried the Duchesse, with the warm blood of the heart rushing through all the delicate coatings of pearl-powder. "If every Frenchman felt as you do; if in this Paris of ours all hostilities of class may merge in the one thought of the common country; if in French hearts there yet thrills the same sentiment as that which, in the terrible days when all other ties were rent asunder, revered France as mother, and rallied her sons to her aid against the confederacy of Europe,—why, then, we need not grow pale with dismay at the sight of a Prussian needle-gun. Hist! look yonder: is not that a tableau of Youth in Arcady? Worlds rage around, and Love, unconcerned, whispers to Love!" The Duchesse here pointed to a corner of the adjoining room in which Alain and Valerie sat apart, he whispering into her ear; her cheek downcast, and, even seen at that distance, brightened by the delicate tenderness of its blushes.

CHAPTER III.

But in that small assembly there were two who did not attract the notice of Duplessis or of the lady of the Imperial Court. While the Prince ---- and the placid Looker-on were engaged at a contest of ecarte, with the lively Venosta, for the gallery, interposing criticisms and admonitions, Isaura was listlessly turning over a collection of photographs, strewed on a table that stood near to an open window in the remoter angle of the room, communicating with a long and wide balcony filled partially with flowers and overlooking the Champs Elysees, softly lit up by the innumerable summer stars. Suddenly a whisper, the command of which she could not resist, thrilled through her ear, and sent the blood rushing back to her heart.

"Do you remember that evening at Enghien? how I said that our imagination could not carry us beyond the question whether we two should be gazing together that night twelve months on that star which each of us had singled out from the hosts of heaven? That was the 8th of July. It is the 8th of July once more. Come and seek for our chosen star--come. I have something to say, which say I must. Come."

Mechanically, as it were,--mechanically, as they tell us the Somnambulist obeys the Mesmeriser,--Isaura obeyed that summons. In a kind of dreamy submission she followed his steps, and found herself on the balcony, flowers around her and stars above, by the side of the man who had been to her that being ever surrounded by flowers and lighted by stars,--the ideal of Romance to the heart of virgin Woman.

"Isaura," said the Englishman, softly. At the sound of her own name for the first time heard from those lips, every nerve in her frame quivered. "Isaura, I have tried to live without you. I cannot. You are all in all to me: without you it seems to me as if earth had no flowers, and even heaven had withdrawn its stars. Are there differences between us, differences of taste, of sentiments, of habits, of thought? Only let me hope that you can love me a tenth part so much as I love you, and such differences cease to be discord. Love harmonises all sounds, blends all colours into its own divine oneness of heart and soul. Look up! is not the star which this time last year invited our gaze above, is it not still there? Does it not still invite our gaze? Isaura, speak!"

"Hush, hush, hush,"--the girl could say no more, but she recoiled from his side.

The recoil did not wound him: there was no hate in it. He advanced, he caught her hand, and continued, in one of those voices which become so musical in summer nights under starry skies:

"Isaura, there is one name which I can never utter without a reverence due to the religion which binds earth to heaven--a name which to man should be the symbol of life cheered and beautified, exalted, hallowed. That name is 'wife.' Will you take that name from me?"

And still Isaura made no reply. She stood mute, and cold, and rigid as a statue of marble. At length, as if consciousness had been arrested and was struggling back, she sighed heavily, and passed her hands slowly over her forehead.

"Mockery, mockery," she said then, with a smile half bitter, half plaintive, on her colourless lips. "Did you wait to ask me that question till you knew what my answer must be? I have pledged the name of wife to another."

"No, no; you say that to rebuke, to punish me! Unsay it! unsay it!"

Isaura beheld the anguish of his face with bewildered eyes. "How can my words pain you?" she said, drearily. "Did you not write that I had unfitted myself to be wife to you?"

"I?"

"That I had left behind me the peaceful immunities of private life? I felt you were so right! Yes! I am affianced to one who thinks that in spite of that misfortune--"

"Stop, I command you--stop! You saw my letter to Mrs. Morley. I have not had one moment free from torture and remorse since I wrote it. But whatever in that letter you might justly resent--"

"I did not resent--"

Graham heard not the interruption, but hurried on. "You would forgive could you read my heart. No matter. Every sentiment in that letter, except those which conveyed admiration, I retract. Be mine, and instead of presuming to check in you the irresistible impulse of genius to the first place in the head or the heart of the world, I teach myself to encourage, to share, to exult in it. Do you know what a difference there is between the absent one and the present one--between the distant image against whom our doubts, our fears, our suspicions, raise up hosts of imaginary giants, barriers of visionary walls, and the beloved face before the sight of which the hosts are fled, the walls are vanished? Isaura, we meet again. You know now from my own lips that I love you. I think your lips will not deny that you love me. You say that you are affianced to another. Tell the man frankly, honestly, that you mistook your heart. It is not yours to give. Save yourself, save him, from a union in which there can be no happiness."

"It is too late," said Isaura, with hollow tones, but with no trace of vacillating weakness on her brow and lips. "Did I say now to that other one, 'I break the faith that I pledged to you,' I should kill him, body and soul. Slight thing though I be, to him I am all in all; to you, Mr. Vane, to you a memory--the memory of one whom a year, perhaps a month, hence, you will rejoice to think you have escaped."

She passed from him--passed away from the flowers and the starlight; and when Graham,--recovering from the stun of her crushing words, and with the haughty mien and stop of the man who goes forth from the ruin of his hopes, leaning for support upon his pride,--when Graham re-entered the room, all the guests had departed save only Alain, who was still exchanging whispered words with Valerie.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day, at the hour appointed, Graham entered Alain's apartment.

"I am glad to tell you," said the Marquis, gaily, "that the box has arrived, and we will very soon examine its contents. Breakfast claims precedence." During the meal Alain was in gay spirits, and did not at first notice the gloomy countenance and abstracted mood of his guest. At length, surprised at the dull response to his lively sallies on the part of a man generally so pleasant in the frankness of his speech, and the cordial ring of his sympathetic laugh, it occurred to him that the change in Graham must be ascribed to something that had gone wrong in the meeting with Isaura the evening before; and remembering the curtness with which Graham had implied disinclination to converse about the fair Italian, he felt perplexed how to reconcile the impulse of his good nature with the discretion imposed on his good-breeding. At all events, a compliment to the lady whom Graham had so admired could do no harm.

"How well Mademoiselle Cicogna looked last night!"

"Did she? It seemed to me that, in health at least, she did not look very well. Have you heard what day M. Thiers will speak on the war?"

"Thiers? No. Who cares about Thiers? Thank heaven his day is past! I don't know any unmarried woman in Paris, not even Valerie--I mean Mademoiselle Duplessis--who has so exquisite a taste in dress as Mademoiselle Cicogna. Generally speaking, the taste of a female author is atrocious."

"Really--I did not observe her dress. I am no critic on subjects so dainty as the dress of ladies, or the tastes of female authors."

"Pardon me," said the beau Marquis, gravely. "As to dress, I think that so essential a thing in the mind of woman, that no man who cares about women ought to disdain critical study of it. In woman, refinement of character is never found in vulgarity of dress. I have only observed that truth since I came up from Bretagne."

"I presume, my dear Marquis, that you may have read in Bretagne books which very few not being professed scholars have ever read at Paris; and possibly you may remember that Horace ascribes the most exquisite refinement in dress, denoted by the untranslatable words, 'simplex munditiis,' to a lady who was not less distinguished by the ease and rapidity with which she could change her affection. Of course that allusion does not apply to Mademoiselle Cicogna, but there are many other exquisitely dressed ladies at Paris of whom an ill-fated admirer

'fidem
Mutatosque deos flebit.'

"Now, with your permission, we will adjourn to the box of letters."

The box being produced and unlocked, Alain looked with conscientious care at its contents before he passed over to Graham's inspection a few epistles, in which the Englishman immediately detected the same handwriting as that of the letter from Louise which Richard King had bequeathed to him.

They were arranged and numbered chronologically.

LETTER I.

DEAR M. LE MARQUIS,--How can I thank you sufficiently for obtaining and remitting to me those certificates? You are too aware of the unhappy episode in my life not to know how inestimable is the service you render me. I am saved all further molestation from the man who had indeed no right over my freedom, but whose persecution might compel me to the scandal and disgrace of an appeal to the law for protection, and the avowal of the illegal marriage into which I was duped. I would rather be torn limb from limb by wild horses, like the Queen in the history books, than dishonour myself and the ancestry which I may at least claim on the mother's side, by proclaiming that I had lived with that low Englishman as his wife, when I was only--O heavens, I cannot conclude the sentence!

"No, Mons. le Marquis, I am in no want of the pecuniary aid you so generously wish to press on me. Though I know not where to address my poor dear uncle,--though I doubt, even if I did, whether I could venture to confide to him the secret known only to yourself as to the name I now bear--and if he hear of me at all he must believe me dead,--yet I have enough left of the money he last remitted to me for present support; and when that fails, I think, what with my knowledge of English and such other slender accomplishments as I possess, I could maintain myself as a teacher or governess in some German family. At all events, I will write to you again soon, and I entreat you to let me know all you can learn about my uncle. I feel so grateful to you for your just disbelief of the horrible calumny which must be so intolerably galling to a man so proud, and, whatever his errors, so incapable of a baseness.

"Direct to me Poste restante, Augsburg.

"Yours with all consideration,

LETTER II.

(Seven months after the date of Letter 1.)

"AUGSBURG.

"DEAR M. LE MARQUIS,--I thank you for your kind little note informing me of the pains you have taken, as yet with no result, to ascertain what has become of my unfortunate uncle. My life since I last wrote has been a very quiet one. I have been teaching among a few families here; and among my pupils are two little girls of very high birth. They have taken so great a fancy to me that their mother has just asked me to come and reside at their house as governess. What wonderfully kind hearts those Germans have,--so simple, so truthful! They raise no troublesome questions,--accept my own story implicitly." Here follow a few commonplace sentences about the German character, and a postscript. "I go into my new home next week. When you hear more of my uncle, direct to me at the Countess von Rudesheim, Schloss -- -----, near Berlin."

"Rudesheim!" Could this be the relation, possibly the wife, of the Count von Rudesheim with whom Graham had formed acquaintance last year?

LETTER III.

(Between three and four years after the date of the last.)

"You startle me indeed, dear M. le Marquis. My uncle said to have been recognised in Algeria under another name, a soldier in the Algerian army? My dear, proud, luxurious uncle! Ah, I cannot believe it, any more than you do: but I long eagerly for such further news as you can learn of him. For myself, I shall perhaps surprise you when I say I am about to be married. Nothing can exceed the amiable kindness I have received from the Rudesheims since I have been in their house. For the last year especially I have been treated on equal terms as one of the family. Among the habitual visitors at the house is a gentleman of noble birth, but not of rank too high, nor of fortune too great, to make a marriage with the French widowed governess a misalliance. I am sure that he loves me sincerely; and he is the only man I ever met whose love I have cared to win. We are to be married in the course of the year. Of course he is ignorant of my painful history, and will never learn it. And after all, Louise D---- is dead. In the home to which I am about to remove, there is no probability that the wretched Englishman can ever cross my path. My secret is as safe with you as in the grave that holds her whom in the name of Louise D---- you once loved. Henceforth I shall trouble you no more with my letters; but if you hear anything decisively authentic of my uncle's fate, write me a line at any time, directed as before to Madame ----, enclosed to the Countess von Rudesheim.

"And accept, for all the kindness you have ever shown me, as to one whom you did not disdain to call a kinswoman, the assurance of my undying gratitude. In the alliance she now makes, your kinswoman does not discredit the name through which she is connected with the yet loftier line of Rochebriant."

To this letter the late Marquis had appended in pencil. "Of course Rochebriant never denies the claim of a kinswoman, even though a drawing-master's daughter. Beautiful creature, Louise, but a termagant. I could not love Venus if she were a termagant. L.'s head turned by the unlucky discovery that her mother was noble. In one form or other, every woman has the same disease--vanity. Name of her intended not mentioned--easily found out."

The next letter was dated May 7, 1859, on black-edged paper, and contained but these lines: "I was much comforted by your kind visit yesterday, dear Marquis. My affliction has been heavy: but for the last two years my poor husband's conduct has rendered my life unhappy, and I am recovering the shock of his sudden death. It is true that I and the children are left very ill provided for; but I cannot accept your generous offer of aid. Have no fear as to my future fate. Adieu, my dear Marquis! This will reach you just before you start for Naples. _Bon voyage_." There was no address on this note--no postmark on the envelope--evidently sent by hand.

The last note, dated 1861, March 20, was briefer than its predecessor. "I have taken your advice, dear Marquis; and, overcoming all scruples, I have accepted his kind offer, on the condition that I am never to be taken to England. I had no option in this marriage. I can now own to you that my poverty had become urgent.--Yours, with inalienable gratitude. This last note, too, was without postmark, and was evidently

sent by hand.

"There are no other letters, then, from this writer?" asked Graham; "and no further clue as to her existence?"

"None that I have discovered; and I see now why I preserved these letters. There is nothing in their contents not creditable to my poor father. They show how capable he was of good-natured disinterested kindness towards even a distant relation of whom he could certainly not have been proud, judging not only by his own pencilled note, or by the writer's condition as a governess, but by her loose sentiments as to the marriage tie. I have not the slightest idea who she could be. I never at least heard of one connected, however distantly, with my family, whom I could identify with the writer of these letters."

"I may hold them a short time in my possession?"

"Pardon me a preliminary question. If I may venture to form a conjecture, the object of your search must be connected with your countryman, whom the lady politely calls the 'wretched Englishman;' but I own I should not like to lend, through these letters, a pretence to any steps that may lead to a scandal in which my father's name or that of any member of my family could be mixed up."

"Marquis, it is to prevent the possibility of all scandal that I ask you to trust these letters to my discretion."

"_Foi de gentilhomme_?"

"_Foi de gentilhomme_!"

"Take them. When and where shall we meet again?"

"Soon, I trust; but I must leave Paris this evening. I am bound to Berlin in quest of this Countess von Rudesheim: and I fear that in a very few days intercourse between France and the German frontier will be closed upon travellers."

After a few more words not worth recording, the two young men shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER V.

It was with an interest languid and listless indeed, compared with that which he would have felt a day before, that Graham mused over the remarkable advances towards the discovery of Louise Duval which were made in the letters he had perused. She had married, then, first a foreigner, whom she spoke of as noble, and whose name and residence could be easily found through the Countess von Rudesheim. The marriage did not seem to have been a happy one. Left a widow in reduced circumstances, she had married again, evidently without affection. She was living so late as 1861, and she had children living in 1859: was the child referred to by Richard King one of them?

The tone and style of the letters served to throw some light on the character of the writer: they evinced pride, stubborn self-will, and

unamiable hardness of nature; but her rejection of all pecuniary aid from a man like the late Marquis de Rochebriant betokened a certain dignity of sentiment. She was evidently, whatever her strange ideas about her first marriage with Richard King, no vulgar woman of gallantry; and there must have been some sort of charm about her to have excited a friendly interest in a kinsman so remote, and a man of pleasure so selfish, as her high-born correspondent.

But what now, so far as concerned his own happiness, was the hope, the probable certainty, of a speedy fulfilment of the trust bequeathed to him? Whether the result, in the death of the mother, and more especially of the child, left him rich, or, if the last survived, reduced his fortune to a modest independence, Isaura was equally lost to him, and fortune became valueless. But his first emotions on recovering from the shock of hearing from Isaura's lips that she was irrevocably affianced to another, were not those of self-reproach. They were those of intense bitterness against her who, if really so much attached to him as he had been led to hope, could within so brief a time reconcile her heart to marriage with another. This bitterness was no doubt unjust; but I believe it to be natural to men of a nature so proud and of affections so intense as Graham's, under similar defeats of hope. Resentment is the first impulse in a man loving with the whole ardour of his soul, rejected, no matter why or wherefore, by the woman by whom he had cause to believe he himself was beloved; and though Graham's standard of honour was certainly the reverse of low, yet man does not view honour in the same light as woman does, when involved in analogous difficulties of position. Graham conscientiously thought that if Isaura so loved him as to render distasteful an engagement to another which could only very recently have been contracted, it would be more honourable frankly so to tell the accepted suitor than to leave him in ignorance that her heart was estranged. But these engagements are very solemn things with girls like Isaura, and hers was no ordinary obligation of woman-honour. Had the accepted one been superior in rank-fortune--all that flatters the ambition of woman in the choice of marriage; had he been resolute, and strong, and self-dependent amid the trials and perils of life--then possibly the woman's honour might find excuse in escaping the penalties of its pledge. But the poor, ailing, infirm, morbid boy-poet, who looked to her as his saving angel in body, in mind, and soul--to say to him, "Give me back my freedom," would be to abandon him to death and to sin. But Graham could not of course divine why what he as a man thought right was to Isaura as woman impossible: and he returned to his old prejudiced notion that there is no real depth and ardour of affection for human lovers in the poetess whose mind and heart are devoted to the creation of imaginary heroes. Absorbed in reverie, he took his way slowly and with downcast looks towards the British embassy, at which it was well to ascertain whether the impending war yet necessitated special passports for Germany.

"_Bon-jour, cher ami_," said a pleasant voice; "and how long have you been at Paris?"

"Oh, my dear M. Savarin! charmed to see you looking so well! Madame well too, I trust? My kindest regards to her. I have been in Paris but a day or two, and I leave this evening."

"So soon? The war frightens you away, I suppose. Which way are you going now?"

"To the British embassy."

"Well, I will go with you so far--it is in my own direction. I have to call at the charming Italian's with my congratulations--on news I only heard this morning."

"You mean Mademoiselle Cicogna--and the news that demands congratulations --her approaching marriage!"

"_ Mon Dieu_! when could you have heard of that?"

"Last night at the house of M. Duplessis."

"_ Parbleu_! I shall scold her well for confiding to her new friend Valerie the secret she kept from her old friends, my wife and myself."

"By the way," said Graham, with a tone of admirably-feigned indifference, "who is the happy man? That part of the secret I did not hear."

"Can't you guess?"

"NO."

"Gustave Rameau."

"Ah!" Graham almost shrieked, so sharp and shrill was his cry. "Ah! I ought indeed to have guessed that!"

"Madame Savarin, I fancy, helped to make up the marriage. I hope it may turn out well; certainly it will be his salvation. May it be for her happiness!"

"No doubt of that! Two poets-born for each other, I dare say. Adieu, my dear Savarin! Here we are at the embassy."

CHAPTER VI.

That evening Graham found himself in the coupe of the express train to Strasbourg. He had sent to engage the whole coupe to himself, but that was impossible. One place was bespoken as far as C-----, after which Graham might prosecute his journey alone on paying for the three places.

When he took his seat another man was in the further corner whom he scarcely noticed. The train shot rapidly on for some leagues. Profound silence in the coupe, save at moments those heavy impatient sighs that came from the very depths of the heart, and of which he who sighs is unconscious, burst from the Englishman's lips, and drew on him the observant side-glance of his fellow-traveller.

At length the fellow-traveller said in very good English, though with French accent, "Would you object, sir, to my lighting my little carriage-lantern? I am in the habit of reading in the night train, and the wretched lamp they give us does not permit that. But if you wish to sleep, and my lantern would prevent you doing so, consider my request unasked."

"You are most courteous, sir. Pray light your lantern--that will not

interfere with my sleep."

As Graham thus answered, far away from the place and the moment as his thoughts were, it yet faintly struck him that he had heard that voice before.

The man produced a small lantern, which he attached to the window-sill, and drew forth from a small leathern bag sundry newspapers and pamphlets. Graham flung himself back, and in a minute or so again came his sigh.

"Allow me to offer you those evening journals--you may not have had time to read them before starting," said the fellow-traveller, leaning forward, and extending the newspapers with one hand, while with the other he lifted his lantern. Graham turned, and the faces of the two men were close to each other--Graham with his travelling-cap drawn over his brows, the other with head uncovered.

"Monsieur Lebeau!"

"Bon soir, Mr. Lamb!"

Again silence for a moment or so. Monsieur Lebeau then broke it--

"I think, Mr. Lamb, that in better society than that of the Faubourg Montmartre you are known under another name." Graham had no heart then for the stage-play of a part, and answered, with quiet haughtiness, "Possibly--and what name?"

"Graham Vane. And, sir," continued Lebeau, with a haughtiness equally quiet, but somewhat more menacing, "since we two gentlemen find ourselves thus close, do I ask too much if I inquire why you condescend to seek my acquaintance in disguise?"

"Monsieur le Vicomte de Mauleon, when you talk of disguise, is it too much to inquire why my acquaintance was accepted by Monsieur Lebeau?"

"Ha! Then you confess that it was Victor de Mauleon whom you sought when you first visited the cafe Jean Jacques?"

"Frankly I confess it."

Monsieur Lebeau drew himself back, and seemed to reflect.

"I see! Solely for the purpose of learning whether Victor de Mauleon could give you any information about Louise Duval. Is it so?"

"Monsieur le Vicomte, you say truly."

Again M. Lebeau paused as if in reflection; and Graham, in that state of mind when a man who may most despise and detest the practice of duelling, may yet feel a thrill of delight if some homicide would be good enough to put him out of his misery, flung aside his cap, lifted his broad frank forehead, and stamped his foot impatiently as if to provoke a quarrel.

M. Lebeau lowered his spectacles, and, with those calm, keen, searching eyes of his, gazed at the Englishman.

"It strikes me," he said, with a smile, the fascination of which not even those faded whiskers could disguise--"it strikes me that there are two

ways in which gentlemen such as you and I are can converse: firstly, with reservation and guard against each other; secondly, with perfect openness. Perhaps of the two I have more need of reservation and wary guard against any stranger than you have. Allow me to propose the alternative--perfect openness. What say you?" and he extended his hand.

"Perfect openness," answered Graham, softened into sudden liking for this once terrible swordsman, and shaking, as an Englishman shakes, the hand held out to him in peace by the man from whom he had anticipated quarrel.

"Permit me now, before you address any questions to me, to put one to you. How did you learn that Victor de Mauleon was identical with Jean Lebeau?"

"I heard that from an agent of the police."

"Ah!"

"Whom I consulted as to the means of ascertaining whether Louise Duval was alive,--if so, where she could be found."

"I thank you very much for your information. I had no notion that the police of Paris had divined the original alias of poor Monsieur Lebeau, though something occurred at Lyons which made me suspect it. Strange that the Government, knowing through the police that Victor de Mauleon, a writer they had no reason to favour, had been in so humble a position, should never, even in their official journals, have thought it prudent to say so! But, now I think of it, what if they had? They could prove nothing against Jean Lebeau. They could but say, 'Jean Lebeau is suspected to be too warm a lover of liberty, too earnest a friend of the people, and Jean Lebeau is the editor of La Sens Commun.' Why, that assertion would have made Victor de Mauleon the hero of the Reds, the last thing a prudent Government could desire. I thank you cordially for your frank reply. Now, what question would you put to me?"

"In one word, all you can tell me about Louise Duval."

"You shall have it. I had heard vaguely in my young days that a half-sister of mine by my father's first marriage with Mademoiselle de Beauvilliers had--when in advanced middle life he married a second time--conceived a dislike for her mother-in-law, and, being of age, with an independent fortune of her own, had quitted the house, taken up her residence with an elderly female relative, and there had contracted a marriage with a man who gave her lessons in drawing. After that marriage, which my father in vain tried to prevent, my sister was renounced by her family. That was all I knew till, after I came into my inheritance by the death of both my parents, I learned from my father's confidential lawyer that the drawing-master, M. Duval, had soon dissipated his wife's fortune, become a widower with one child--a girl--and fallen into great distress. He came to my father, begging for pecuniary aid. My father, though by no means rich, consented to allow him a yearly pension, on condition that he never revealed to his child her connection with our family. The man agreed to the condition, and called at my father's lawyer quarterly for his annuity. But the lawyer informed me that this deduction from my income had ceased, that M. Duval had not for a year called or sent for the sum due to him, and that he must therefore be dead. One day my valet informed me that a young lady wished to see me--in those days young ladies very often called on me. I desired her to be shown in. There entered a young creature, almost of my

own age, who, to my amazement saluted me as uncle. This was the child of my half-sister. Her father had been dead several months, fulfilling very faithfully the condition on which he had held his pension, and the girl never dreaming of the claims that, if wise, poor child, she ought not to have cared for, viz.,--to that obsolete useless pauper birthright, a branch on the family tree of a French noble. But in pinch of circumstance, and from female curiosity, hunting among the papers her father had left for some clue to the reasons for the pension he had received, she found letters from her mother, letters from my father, which indisputably proved that she was grandchild to the due Vicomte de Mauleon, and niece to myself. Her story as told to me was very pitiable. Conceiving herself to be nothing higher in birth than daughter to this drawing-master, at his death, poor, penniless orphan that she was, she had accepted the hand of an English student of medicine whom she did not care for. Miserable with this man, on finding by the documents I refer to that she was my niece, she came to me for comfort and counsel. What counsel could I or any man give to her but to make the best of what had happened, and live with her husband? But then she started another question. It seems that she had been talking with some one, I think her landlady, or some other woman with whom she had made acquaintance--was she legally married to this man? Had he not entrapped her ignorance into a false marriage? This became a grave question, and I sent at once to my lawyer. On hearing the circumstances, he at once declared that the marriage was not legal according to the laws of France. But, doubtless, her English soi-disant husband was not cognisant of the French law, and a legal marriage could, with his assent, be at once solemnised. Monsieur Vane, I cannot find words to convey to you the joy that poor girl showed in her face and in her words when she learned that she was not bound to pass her life with that man as his wife. It was in vain to talk and reason with her. Then arose the other question, scarcely less important. True, the marriage was not legal, but would it not be better on all accounts to take steps to have it formally annulled, thus freeing her from the harassment of any claim the Englishman might advance, and enabling her to establish the facts in a right position, not injurious to her honour in the eyes of any future suitor to her hand? She would not hear of such a proposal. She declared that she could not bring to the family she pined to re-enter the scandal of disgrace. To allow that she had made such a misalliance would be bad enough in itself; but to proclaim to the world that, though nominally the wife, she had in fact been only the mistress of this medical student--she would rather throw herself into the Seine. All she desired was to find some refuge, some hiding-place for a time, whence she could write to the man informing him that he had no lawful hold on her. Doubtless he would not seek then to molest her. He would return to his own country, and be effaced from her life. And then, her story unknown, she might form a more suitable alliance. Fiery young creature though she was--true De Mauleon in being so fiery--she interested me strongly. I should say that she was wonderfully handsome; and though imperfectly educated, and brought up in circumstances so lowly, there was nothing common about her--a certain je ne sais quoi of stateliness and race. At all events she did with me what she wished. I agreed to aid her desire of a refuge and hiding-place. Of course I could not lodge her in my own apartment, but I induced a female relation of her mother's, an old lady living at Versailles, to receive her, stating her birth, but of course concealing her illegal marriage.

"From time to time I went to see her. But one day I found this restless bright-plumaged bird flown. Among the ladies who visited at her relative's house was a certain Madame Marigny, a very pretty young widow.

Madame Marigny and Louise formed a sudden and intimate friendship. The widow was moving from Versailles into an apartment at Paris, and invited Louise to share it. She had consented. I was not pleased at this; for the widow was too young, and too much of a coquette, to be a safe companion to Louise. But though professing much gratitude and great regard for me, I had no power of controlling the poor girl's actions. Her nominal husband, meanwhile, had left France, and nothing more was heard or known of him. I saw that the best thing that could possibly befall Louise was marriage with some one rich enough to gratify her taste for luxury and pomp; and that if such a marriage offered itself, she might be induced to free it from all possible embarrassment by procuring the annulment of the former, from which she had hitherto shrunk in such revolt. This opportunity presented itself. A man already rich, and in a career that promised to make him infinitely richer, an associate of mine in those days when I was rapidly squandering the remnant of my inheritance--this man saw her at the opera in company with Madame Marigny, fell violently in love with her, and ascertaining her relationship to me, besought an introduction. I was delighted to give it; and, to say the truth, I was then so reduced to the bottom of my casket, I felt that it was becoming impossible for me to continue the aid I had hitherto given to Louise, and--what then would become of her? I thought it fair to tell Louvier--"

"Louvier--the financier?"

"Ah, that was a slip of the tongue, but no matter; there is no reason for concealing his name. I thought it right, I say, to tell Louvier confidentially the history of the unfortunate illegal marriage. It did not damp his ardour. He wooed her to the best of his power, but she evidently took him into great dislike. One day she sent for me in much excitement, showed me some advertisements in the French journals which, though not naming her, evidently pointed at her, and must have been dictated by her *_soi-disant_* husband. The advertisements might certainly lead to her discovery if she remained in Paris. She entreated my consent to remove elsewhere. Madame Marigny had her own reason for leaving Paris, and would accompany her. I supplied her with the necessary means, and a day or two afterwards she and her friend departed, as I understood, for Brussels. I received no letter from her; and my own affairs so seriously pre-occupied me, that poor Louise might have passed altogether out of my thoughts, had it not been for the suitor she had left in despair behind. Louvier besought me to ascertain her address; but I could give him no, other clue to it than that she said she was going to Brussels, but should soon remove to some quiet village. It was not for a long time--I can't remember how long--it might be several weeks, perhaps two or three months, that I received a short note from her stating that she waited for a small remittance, the last she would accept from me, as she was resolved, so soon as her health would permit, to find means to maintain herself--and telling me to direct to her, *Poste restante, Aix-la-Chapelle*. I sent her the sum she asked, perhaps a little more, but with a confession reluctantly wrung from me that I was a ruined man; and I urged her to think very seriously before she refused the competence and position which a union with M. Louvier would insure.

"This last consideration so pressed on me that, when Louvier called on me, I think that day or the next I gave him Louise's note, and told him that, if he were still as much in love with her as ever, *_les absents ont toujours tort_*, and he had better go to Aix-la-Chapelle and find her out; that he had my hearty approval of his wooing, and consent to his marriage, though I still urged the wisdom and fairness, if she would take

the preliminary step--which, after all, the French law frees as much as possible from pain and scandal--of annulling the irregular marriage into which her childlike youth had been decoyed.

"Louvier left me for Aix-la-Chapelle. The very next day came that cruel affliction which made me a prey to the most intolerable calumny, which robbed me of every friend, which sent me forth from my native country penniless, and resolved to be nameless--until--until--well, until my hour could come again--every dog, if not hanged, has its day;--when that affliction befell me, I quitted France, heard no more of Louvier nor of Louise; indeed, no letter addressed to me at Paris would have reached--"

The man paused here, evidently with painful emotion. He resumed in the quiet matter-of-fact way in which he had commenced his narrative.

"Louise had altogether faded out of my remembrance until your question revived it. As it happened, the question came at the moment when I meditated resuming my real name and social position. In so doing, I should of course come in contact with my old acquaintance Louvier; and the name of Louise was necessarily associated with us. I called on him, and made myself known. The slight information I gave you as to my niece was gleaned from him.

"I may now say more. It appears that when he arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle he found that Louise Duval had left it a day or two previously, and according to scandal had been for some time courted by a wealthy and noble lover, whom she had gone to Munich to meet. Louvier believed this tale: quitted Aix indignantly, and never heard more of her. The probability is, M. Vane, that she must have been long dead. But if living still, I feel quite sure that she will communicate with me some day or other. Now that I have reappeared in Paris in my own name--entered into a career that, for good or for evil, must ere long bring my name very noisily before the public--Louise cannot fail to hear of my existence and my whereabouts; and unless I am utterly mistaken as to her character, she will assuredly inform me of her own. Oblige me with your address, and in that case I will let you know. Of course I take for granted the assurance you gave me last year, that you only desire to discover her in order to render her some benefit, not to injure or molest her?"

"Certainly. To that assurance I pledge my honour. Any letter with which you may favour me had better be directed to my London address; here is my card. But, M. le Vicomte, there is one point on which pray pardon me if I question you still. Had you no suspicion that there was one reason why this lady might have quitted Paris so hastily, and have so shrunk from the thought of a marriage so advantageous, in a worldly point of view, as that with M. Louvier,--namely, that she anticipated the probability of becoming the mother of a child by the man whom she refused to acknowledge as a husband?"

"That idea did not strike me until you asked me if she had a child. Should your conjecture be correct, it would obviously increase her repugnance to apply for the annulment of her illegal marriage. But if Louise is still living and comes across me, I do not doubt that, the motives for concealment no longer operating, she will confide to me the truth. Since we have been talking together thus frankly, I suppose I may fairly ask whether I do not guess correctly in supposing that this _soi-disant_ husband, whose name I forget,--Mac--something, perhaps, Scotch--I think she said he was _Ecosais_,--is dead and has left by will some

legacy to Louise and any child she may have borne to him?"

"Not exactly so. The man, as you say, is dead; but he bequeathed no legacy to the lady who did not hold herself married to him. But there are those connected with him who, knowing the history, think that some compensation is due for the wrong so unconsciously done to her, and yet more to any issue of a marriage not meant to be irregular or illegal. Permit me now to explain why I sought you in another guise and name than my own. I could scarcely place in M. Lebeau the confidence which I now unreservedly place in the Vicomte de Mauleon."

"_Cela va sans dire_. You believed, then, that calumny about the jewels; you do not believe it now?"

"Now! my amazement is, that any one who had known you could believe it."

"Oh, how often, and with tears of rage in my exile--my wanderings--have I asked that question of myself! That rage has ceased; and I have but one feeling left for that credulous, fickle Paris, of which one day I was the idol, the next the byword. Well, a man sometimes plays chess more skilfully for having been long a mere bystander. He understands better how to move, and when to sacrifice the pieces. Politics, M. Vane, is the only exciting game left to me at my years. At yours, there is still that of love. How time flies! we are nearing the station at which I descend. I have kinsfolk of my mother's in these districts. They are not Imperialists; they are said to be powerful in the department. But before I apply to them in my own name, I think it prudent that M. Lebeau should quietly ascertain what is their real strength, and what would be the prospects of success if Victor de Mauleon offered himself as depute at the next election. Wish him joy, M. Vane! If he succeed, you will hear of him some day crowned in the Capitol, or hurled from the Tarpeian rock."

Here the train stopped. The false Lebeau gathered up his papers, readjusted his spectacles and his bag, descended lightly, and, pressing Graham's hand as he paused at the door, said, "Be sure I will not forget your address if I have anything to say. *_Bon voyage_*"

CHAPTER VII.

Graham continued his journey to Strasbourg. On arriving there he felt very unwell. Strong though his frame was, the anguish and self-struggle through which he had passed since the day he had received in London Mrs. Morley's letter, till that on which he had finally resolved on his course of conduct at Paris, and the shock which had annihilated his hopes in Isaura's rejection, had combined to exhaust its endurance, and fever had already commenced when he took his place in the coupe. If there be a thing which a man should not do when his system is undermined, and his pulse between 90 and 100, it is to travel all night by a railway express. Nevertheless, as the Englishman's will was yet stronger than his frame, he would not give himself more than an hour's rest, and again started for Berlin. Long before he got to Berlin, the will failed him--as well as the frame. He was lifted out of the carriage, taken to a hotel in a small German town, and six hours afterwards he was delirious. It was fortunate for him that under such circumstances plenty of money and Scott's circular-notes for some hundreds were found in his pocketbook,

so that he did not fail to receive attentive nursing and skilful medical treatment. There, for the present, I must leave him--leave him for how long? But any village apothecary could say that fever such as his must run its course. He was still in bed, and very dimly--and that but at times--conscious, when the German armies were gathering round the penfold of Sedan.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the news of the disastrous day at Sedan reached Paris, the first effect was that of timid consternation. There were a few cries of *Decheance*! fewer still of *Vive la Republique* among the motley crowds; but they were faint, and chiefly by ragged *gamins*. A small body repaired to Trochu and offered him the sceptre, which he politely declined. A more important and respectable body--for it comprised the majority of the *Corps Legislatif*--urged Palikao to accept the temporary dictatorship, which the War Minister declined with equal politeness. In both these overtures it was clear that the impulse of the proposers was towards any form of government rather than republican. The *sergens de ville* were sufficient that day to put down riot. They did make a charge on a mob, which immediately ran away.

The morning of that day the Council of Ten were summoned by Lebeau--minus only Rameau, who was still too unwell to attend, and the Belgian, not then at Paris; but their place was supplied by the two travelling members, who had been absent from the meeting before recorded. These were conspirators better known in history than those I have before described; professional conspirators--personages who from their youth upwards had done little else but conspire. Following the discreet plan pursued elsewhere throughout this humble work, I give their names other than they bore. One, a very swarthy and ill-favoured man, between forty and fifty, I call Paul Grimm--by origin a German, but by rearing and character French; from the hair on his head, staring up rough and ragged as a bramblebush, to the soles of small narrow feet, shod with dainty care, he was a personal coxcomb, and spent all he could spare on his dress. A clever man, not ill-educated--a vehement and effective speaker at a club. Vanity and an amorous temperament had made him a conspirator, since he fancied he interested the ladies more in that capacity than any other. His companion, Edgar Ferrier, would have been a journalist, only hitherto his opinions had found no readers; the opinions were those of Marat. He rejoiced in thinking that his hour for glory, so long deferred, had now arrived. He was thoroughly sincere: his father and grandfather had died in a madhouse. Both these men, insignificant in ordinary times, were likely to become of terrible importance in the crisis of a revolution. They both had great power with the elements that form a Parisian mob. The instructions given to these members of the Council by Lebeau were brief: they were summed up in the one word, *Decheance*. The formidable nature of a council apparently so meanly constituted became strikingly evident at that moment, because it was so small in number, while each one of these could put in movement a large section of the populace; secondly, because, unlike a revolutionary club or a numerous association, no time was wasted in idle speeches, and all were under the orders of one man of clear head and resolute purpose; and thirdly, and above all, because one man supplied the treasury, and money for an object desired was liberally given and promptly at hand. The meeting did not last ten minutes, and about two hours afterwards its

effects were visible. From Montmartre and Belleville and Montretout poured streams of _ouvriers_, with whom Armand Monnier was a chief, and the _Medecin des Pauvres_ an oracle. Grimm and Ferrier headed other detachments that startled the well-dressed idlers on the Boulevards. The stalwart figure of the Pole was seen on the Place de la Concorde, towering amidst other refugees, amid which glided the Italian champion of humanity. The cry of _Decheance_ became louder. But as yet there were only few cries of _Vive la Republique_!--such a cry was not on the orders issued by Lebeau. At midnight the crowd round the hall of the _Corps Legislatif_ is large: cries of _La Dechaeance_ loud--a few cries, very feeble, of _Vive la Republique_!

What followed on the 4th--the marvellous audacity with which half-a-dozen lawyers belonging to a pitiful minority in a Chamber elected by universal suffrage walked into the Hotel de Ville and said, "The Republic is established, and we are its Government," history has told too recently for me to narrate. On the evening of the 5th the Council of Ten met again: the Pole; the Italian radiant; Grimm and Ferrier much excited and rather drunk; the Medecin des Pauvres thoughtful; and Armand Monnier gloomy. A rumour has spread that General Trochu, in accepting the charge imposed on him, has exacted from the Government the solemn assurance of respect for God, and for the rights of Family and Property. The Atheist is very indignant at the assent of the Government to the first proposition; Monnier equal indignant at the assent to the second and third. What has that honest _ouvrier_ conspired for?--what has he suffered for?--of late nearly starved for?--but to marry another man's wife, getting rid of his own, and to legalise a participation in the property of his employer,--and now he is no better off than before. "There must be another revolution," he whispers to the Atheist.

"Certainly," whispers back the Atheist; "he who desires to better this world must destroy all belief in another." The conclave was assembled when Lebeau entered by the private door. He took his place at the head of the table; and, fixing on the group eyes that emitted a cold gleam through the spectacles, thus spoke:

"Messieurs, or Citoyens, which ye will--I no longer call ye confreres--you have disobeyed or blundered my instructions. On such an occasion disobedience and blunder are crimes equally heinous."

Angry murmurs.

"Silence! Do not add mutiny to your other offences. My instructions were simple and short. Aid in the abolition of the Empire. Do not aid in any senseless cry for a Republic or any other form of government. Leave that to the Legislature. What have you done? You swelled the crowd that invaded the _Corps Ligislatif_. You, Dombinsky, not even a Frenchman, dare to mount the President's rostrum, and brawl forth your senseless jargon. You, Edgar Ferrier, from whom I expected better, ascend the tribune, and invite the ruffians in the crowd to march to the prisons and release the convicts; and all of you swell the mob at the Hotel de Ville, and inaugurate the reign of folly by creating an oligarchy of lawyers to resist the march of triumphal armies. Messieurs, I have done with you. You are summoned for the last time: the Council is dissolved."

With these words Lebeau put on his hat, and turned to depart. But the Pole, who was seated near him, sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "Traitor, thou shalt not escape! Comrades, he wants to sell us!"

"I have a right to sell you at least, for I bought you, and a very bad bargain I made," said Lebeau, in a tone of withering sarcasm.

"Liar!" cried the Pole, and seized Lebeau by the left hand, while with the right he drew forth a revolver. Ferrier and Grimm, shouting, "_A bas le renegat_!" would have rushed forward in support of the Pole, but Monnier thrust himself between them and their intended victim, crying with a voice that dominated their yell, "Back!--we are not assassins." Before he had finished the sentence the Pole was on his knees. With a vigour which no one could have expected from the seeming sexagenarian, Lebeau had caught the right arm of his assailant, twisted it back so mercilessly as almost to dislocate elbow and shoulder joint. One barrel of the revolver discharged itself harmlessly against the opposite wall, and the pistol itself then fell from the unnerved hand of the would-be assassin; and what with the pain and the sudden shock, the stalwart Dombinsky fell in the attitude of a suppliant at the feet of his unlooked-for vanquisher.

Lebeau released his hold, possessed himself of the pistol, pointing the barrels towards Edgar Ferrier, who stood with mouth agape and lifted arm arrested, and said quietly: "Monsieur, have the goodness to open that window." Ferrier mechanically obeyed. "Now, hireling," continued Lebeau, addressing the vanquished Pole, "choose between the door and the window."

"Go, my friend," whispered the Italian. The Pole did not utter a word; but rising nimbly, and rubbing his arm, stalked to the door. There he paused a moment and said, "I retire overpowered by numbers," and vanished.

"Messieurs," resumed Lebeau, calmly, "I repeat that the Council is dissolved. In fact its object is fulfilled more abruptly than any of us foresaw, and by means which I at least had been too long out of Paris to divine as possible. I now see that every aberration of reason is possible to the Parisians. The object that united us was the fall of the Empire. As I have always frankly told you, with that object achieved, separation commences. Each of us has his own crotchet, which differs from the other man's. Pursue yours as you will--I pursue mine--you will find Jean Lebeau no more in Paris: _il s'eface. Au plaisir, mais pas au revoir_."

He retreated to the masked door and disappeared.

Marc le Roux, the porter or custos of that ruinous council-hall, alarmed at the explosion of the pistol, had hurried into the room, and now stood unheeded by the door with mouth agape, while Lebeau thus curtly dissolved the assembly. But when the president vanished through the secret doorway, Le Roux also retreated. Hastily descending the stairs, he made as quickly as his legs could carry him for the mouth of the alley in the rear of the house, through which he knew that Lebeau must pass. He arrived, panting and breathless, in time to catch hold of the ex-president's arm. "Pardon, citizen," stammered he, "but do I understand that you have sent the Council of Ten to the devil?"

"I? Certainly not, my good Paul; I dismiss them to go where they like. If they prefer the direction you name, it is their own choice. I declined to accompany them, and I advise you not to do so."

"But, citizen, have you considered what is to become of Madame? Is she to be turned out of the lodge? Are my wages to stop, and Madame to be left without a crust to put into her soup?"

"Not so bad as that; I have just paid the rent of the baraque for three months in advance, and there is your quarter's pay, in advance also. My kind regards to Madame, and tell her to keep your skin safe from the schemes of these lunatics." Thrusting some pieces of gold into the hands of the porter, Lebeau nodded his adieu, and hastened along his way.

Absorbed in his own reflections, he did not turn to look behind. But if he had, he could not have detected the dark form of the porter, creeping in the deep shadow of the streets with distant but watchful footsteps.

CHAPTER, IX.

The conspirators, when left by their president, dispersed in deep, not noisy resentment. They were indeed too stunned for loud demonstration; and belonging to different grades of life, and entertaining different opinions, their confidence in each other seemed lost now that the chief who had brought and kept them together was withdrawn from their union. The Italian and the Atheist slunk away, whispering to each other. Grimm reproached Ferrier for deserting Dombinsky and obeying Lebeau. Ferrier accused Grimm of his German origin, and hinted at denouncing him as a Prussian spy. Gaspard le Noy linked his arm in Monnier's, and when they had gained the dark street without, leading into a labyrinth of desolate lanes, the Medicin des Pauvres said to the mechanic: "You are a brave fellow, Monnier. Lebeau owes you a good turn. But for your cry, 'We are not assassins,' the Pole might not have been left without support. No atmosphere is so infectious as that in which we breathe the same air of revenge: when the violence of one man puts into action the anger or suspicion of others, they become like a pack of hounds, which follow the spring of the first hound, whether on the wild boar or their own master. Even I, who am by no means hot-headed, had my hand on my case-knife when the word 'assassin' rebuked and disarmed me."

"Nevertheless," said Monnier, gloomily, "I half repent the impulse which made me interfere to save that man. Better he should die than live to betray the cause we allowed him to lead."

"Nay, mon ami, speaking candidly, we must confess that he never from the first pretended to advocate the cause for which you conspired. On the contrary, he always said that with the fall of the Empire our union would cease, and each become free to choose his own way towards his own after-objects."

"Yes," answered Armand, reluctantly; "he said that to me privately, with still greater plainness than he said it to the Council. But I answered as plainly."

"How?"

"I told him that the man who takes the first step in a revolution, and persuades others to go along with him, cannot in safety stand still or retreat when the next step is to be taken. It is 'en avant' or 'a la lanterne.' So it shall be with him. Shall a fellow-being avail himself

of the power over my mind which he derives from superior education or experience,--break into wild fragments my life, heretofore tranquil, orderly, happy,--make use of my opinions, which were then but harmless desires, to serve his own purpose, which was hostile to the opinions he roused into action,--say to me, 'Give yourself up to destroy the first obstacle in the way of securing a form of society which your inclinations prefer,' and then, that first obstacle destroyed, cry, 'Halt! I go with you no further; I will not help you to piece together the life I have induced you to shatter; I will not aid you to substitute for the society that pained you the society that would please; I leave you, struggling, bewildered, maddened, in the midst of chaos within and without you?' Shall a fellow-being do this, and vanish with a mocking cry: 'Tool! I have had enough of thee; I cast thee aside as worthless lumber'? Ah! let him beware! The tool is of iron, and can be shaped to edge and point." The passion with which this rough eloquence was uttered, and the fierce sinister expression that had come over a countenance habitually open and manly, even when grave and stern, alarmed and startled Le Noy. "Pooh, my friend!" he said, rather falteringly, "you are too excited now to think justly. Go home and kiss your children. Never do anything that may make them shrink from their father. And as to Lebeau, try and forget him. He says he shall disappear from Paris. I believe him. It is clear to me that the man is not what he seemed to us. No man of sixty could by so easy a sleight of hand have brought that giant Pole to his knee. If Lebeau reappear it will be in some other form. Did you notice that in the momentary struggle his flaxen wig got disturbed, and beneath it I saw a dark curl. I suspect that the man is not only younger than he seemed, but of higher rank--a conspirator against one throne, perhaps, in order to be minister under another. There are such men."

Before Monnier, who seemed struck by these conjectures, collected his thoughts to answer, a tall man in the dress of a sous lieutenant stopped under a dim gas-lamp, and, catching sight of the artisan's face, seized him by the hand, exclaiming, "Armand, mon frere! well met; strange times, eh? Come and discuss them at the cafe de Lyon yonder over a bowl of punch. I'll stand treat."

"Agreed, dear Charles."

"And if this monsieur is a friend of yours, perhaps he will join us."

"You are too obliging, Monsieur," answered Le Noy, not ill-pleased to get rid of his excited companion; "but it has been a busy day with me, and I am only fit for bed. Be abstinent of the punch, Armand. You are feverish already. Good-night, Messieurs."

The cafe de Lyon, in vogue among the National Guard of the quartier, was but a few yards off, and the brothers turned towards it arm in arm. "Who is the friend?" asked Charles; "I don't remember to have seen him with thee before."

"He belongs to the medical craft--a good patriot and a kind man--attends the poor gratuitously. Yes, Charles, these are strange times; what dost thou think will come of them?"

They had now entered the cafe; and Charles had ordered the punch, and seated himself at a vacant table before he replied. "What will come of these times? I will tell thee. National deliverance and regeneration through the ascendancy of the National Guard."

"Eh? I don't take," said Armand, bewildered.

"Probably not," answered Charles, with an air of compassionate conceit; "thou art a dreamer, but I am a politician." He tapped his forehead significantly. "At this custom-house, ideas are examined before they are passed."

Armand gazed at his brother wistfully, and with a defence he rarely manifested towards any one who disputed his own claims to superior intelligence. Charles was a few years older than Monnier; he was of large build; he had shaggy lowering eyebrows, a long obstinate upper lip, the face of a man who was accustomed to lay down the law. Inordinate self-esteem often gives that character to a physiognomy otherwise commonplace. Charles passed for a deep thinker in his own set, which was a very different set from Armand's--not among workmen but small shopkeepers. He had risen in life to a grade beyond Armand's; he had always looked to the main chance, married the widow of a hosier and glover much older than himself, and in her right was a very respectable tradesman, comfortably well off; a Liberal, of course, but a Liberal bourgeois, equally against those above him and those below. Needless to add that he had no sympathy with his brother's socialistic opinions. Still he loved that brother as well as he could love any one except himself. And Armand, who was very affectionate, and with whom family ties were very strong, returned that love with ample interest; and though so fiercely at war with the class to which Charles belonged, was secretly proud of having a brother who was of that class. So in England I have known the most violent antagonist of the landed aristocracy--himself a cobbler--who interrupts a discourse on the crimes of the aristocracy by saying, "Though I myself descend from a county family."

In an evil day Charles Monnier, enrolled in the National Guard, had received promotion in that patriotic corps. From that date he began to neglect his shop, to criticise military matters, and to think that if merit had fair play he should be a Cincinnatus or a Washington, he had not decided which.

"Yes," resumed Charles, ladling out the punch, "thou hast wit enough to perceive that our generals are imbeciles or traitors; that gredin Bonaparte has sold the army for ten millions of francs to Bismarck, and I have no doubt that Wimpffen has his share of the bargain. McMahan was wounded conveniently, and has his own terms for it. The regular army is nowhere. Thou wilt see--thou wilt see--they will not stop the march of the Prussians. Trochu will be obliged to come to the National Guard. Then we shall say, 'General, give us our terms, and go to sleep.'

"I shall be summoned to the council of war. I have my plan. I explain it--'tis accepted--it succeeds. I am placed in supreme command--the Prussians are chased back to their sour-kroust. And I--well--I don't like to boast, but thou'lt see--thou'lt see--what will happen."

"And thy plan, Charles--thou hast formed it already?"

"Ay, ay,--the really military genius is prompt, mon petit Armand--a flash of the brain. Hark ye! Let the Vandals come to Paris and invest it. Whatever their numbers on paper, I don't care a button; they can only have a few thousands at any given point in the vast circumference of the capital. Any fool must grant that--thou must grant it eh?"

"It seems just."

"Of course. Well, then, we proceed by sorties of 200,000 men repeated every other day, and in twelve days the Prussians are in full flight. The country rises on their flight--they are cut to pieces. I depose Trochu--the National Guard elects the Saviour of France. I have a place in my eye for thee. Thou art superb as a decorator--thou shalt be Minister des Beaux Arts. But keep clear of the canaille. No more strikes then--thou wilt be an employer--respect thy future order."

[Charles Monnier seems to have indiscreetly blabbed out his "idea," for it was plagiarised afterwards at a meeting of the National Guards in the Salle de la Bourse by Citizen Rochebrune (slain 19th January, 1871, in the affair of Montretout). The plan, which he developed nearly in the same words as Charles Monnier, was received with lively applause; and at the close of his speech it was proposed to name at once Citizen Rochebrune General of the National Guard, an honour which, unhappily for his country, the citizen had the modesty to decline.]

Armand smiled mournfully. Though of intellect which, had it been disciplined, was far superior to his brother's, it was so estranged from practical opinions, so warped, so heated, so flawed and cracked in parts, that he did not see the ridicule of Charles's braggadocio. Charles had succeeded in life, Armand had failed; and Armand believed in the worldly wisdom of the elder born. But he was far too sincere for any bribe to tempt him to forsake his creed and betray his opinions. And he knew that it must be a very different revolution from that which his brother contemplated, that could allow him to marry another man's wife, and his "order" to confiscate other people's property.

"Don't talk of strikes, Charles. What is done is done. I was led into heading a strike, not on my own account, for I was well paid and well off, but for the sake of my fellow-workmen. I may regret now what I did, for the sake of Marie and the little ones. But it is an affair of honour, and I cannot withdraw from the cause till my order, as thou namest my class, has its rights."

"Bah! thou wilt think better of it when thou art an employer. Thou hast suffered enough already. Remember that I warned thee against that old fellow in spectacles whom I met once at thy house. I told thee he would lead thee into mischief, and then leave thee to get out of it. I saw through him. I have a head! Va!"

"Thou wert a true prophet--he has duped me. But in moving me he has set others in movement; and I suspect he will find he has duped himself. Time will show."

Here the brothers were joined by some loungers belonging to the National Guard. The talk became general, the potations large. Towards daybreak Armand reeled home, drunk for the first time in his life. He was one of those whom drink makes violent. Marie had been sitting up for him, alarmed at his lengthened absence. But when she would have thrown herself on his breast, her pale face and her passionate sobs enraged him. He flung her aside roughly. From that night the man's nature was changed. If, as a physiognomist has said, each man has in him a portion of the wild beast, which is suppressed by mild civilising circumstances, and comes uppermost when self-control is lost, the nature of many an honest workman, humane and tender-hearted as the best of us, commenced a change into the wild beast that raged through the civil war of the

Communists, on the day when half-a-dozen Incapables, with no more claim to represent the people of Paris than half-a-dozen monkeys would have, were allowed to elect themselves to supreme power, and in the very fact of that election released all the elements of passion, and destroyed all the bulwarks of order.

CHAPTER X.

No man perhaps had more earnestly sought and more passionately striven for the fall of the Empire than Victor de Mauleon; and perhaps no man was more dissatisfied and disappointed by the immediate consequences of that fall. In first conspiring against the Empire, he had naturally enough, in common with all the more intelligent enemies of the dynasty, presumed that its fate would be worked out by the normal effect of civil causes--the alienation of the educated classes, the discontent of the artisans, the eloquence of the press and of popular meetings, strengthened in proportion as the Emperor had been compelled to relax the former checks upon the license of either. And De Mauleon had no less naturally concluded that there would be time given for the preparation of a legitimate and rational form of government to succeed that which was destroyed. For, as has been hinted or implied, this remarkable man was not merely an instigator of revolution through the Secret Council, and the turbulent agencies set in movement through the lower strata of society;--he was also in confidential communication with men eminent for wealth, station, and political repute, from whom he obtained the funds necessary for the darker purposes of conspiracy, into the elaboration of which they did not inquire; and these men, though belonging like himself to the Liberal party, were no hot-blooded democrats. Most of them were in favour of constitutional monarchy; all of them for forms of government very different from any republic in which socialists or communists could find themselves uppermost. Among these politicians were persons ambitious and able, who, in scheming for the fall of the Empire, had been prepared to undertake the task of conducting to ends compatible with modern civilisation the revolution they were willing to allow a mob at Paris to commence. The opening of the war necessarily suspended their designs. How completely the events of the 4th September mocked the calculations of their ablest minds, and paralysed the action of their most energetic spirits, will appear in the conversation I am about to record. It takes place between Victor de Mauleon and the personage to whom he had addressed the letter written on the night before the interview with Louvier, in which Victor had announced his intention of reappearing in Paris in his proper name and rank. I shall designate this correspondent as vaguely as possible; let me call him the Incognito. He may yet play so considerable a part in the history of France as a potent representative of the political philosophy of De Tocqueville--that is, of Liberal principles incompatible with the absolute power either of a sovereign or a populace, and resolutely opposed to experiments on the foundations of civilised society--that it would be unfair to himself and his partisans if, in a work like this, a word were said that could lead malignant conjecture to his identity with any special chief of the opinions of which I here present him only as a type.

The Incognito, entering Victor's apartment:

"My dear friend, even if I had not received your telegram, I should have hastened hither on the news of this astounding revolution. It is only in

Paris that such a tragedy could be followed by such a farce. You were on the spot--a spectator. Explain it if you can."

DE MAULEON.--"I was more than a spectator; I was an actor. Hiss me-- I deserve it. When the terrible news from Sedan reached Paris, in the midst of the general stun and bewilderment I noticed a hesitating timidity among all those who had wares in their shops and a good coat on their backs. They feared that to proclaim the Empire defunct would be to install the Red Republic with all its paroxysm of impulsive rage and all its theories of wholesale confiscation. But since it was impossible for the object we had in view to let slip the occasion of deposing the dynasty which stood in its way, it was necessary to lose no time in using the revolutionary part of the populace for that purpose. I assisted in doing so; my excuse is this--that in a time of crisis a man of action must go straight to his immediate object, and in so doing employ the instruments at his command. I made, however, one error in judgment which admits no excuse: I relied on all I had heard, and all I had observed, of the character of Trochu, and I was deceived, in common, I believe, with all his admirers, and three parts of the educated classes of Paris."

INCOGNITO.--"I should have been equally deceived! Trochu's conduct is a riddle that I doubt if he himself can ever solve. He was master of the position; he had the military force in his hands if he combined with Palikao, which, whatever the jealousies between the two, it was his absolute duty to do. He had a great prestige--"

DE MAULEON.--"And for the moment a still greater popularity. His _ipse dixit_ could have determined the wavering and confused spirits of the population. I was prepared for his abandonment of the Emperor--even of the Empress and the Regency. But how could I imagine that he, the man of moderate politics, of Orleanistic leanings, the clever writer, the fine talker, the chivalrous soldier, the religious Breton, could abandon everything that was legal, everything that could save France against the enemy, and Paris against civil discord; that he would connive at the annihilation of the Senate, of the popular Assembly, of every form of Government that could be recognised as legitimate at home or abroad, accept service under men whose doctrines were opposed to all his antecedents, all his professed opinions, and inaugurate a chaos under the name of a Republic!"

INCOGNITO.--"How, indeed? How suppose that the National Assembly, just elected by a majority of seven millions and a half, could be hurried into a conjuring-bog, and reappear as the travesty of a Venetian oligarchy, composed of half-a-dozen of its most unpopular members! The sole excuse for Trochu is, that he deemed all other considerations insignificant compared with the defence of Paris, and the united action of the nation against the invaders. But if that were his honest desire in siding with this monstrous usurpation of power, he did everything by which the desire could be frustrated. Had there been any provisional body composed of men known and esteemed, elected by the Chambers, supported by Trochu and the troops at his back, there would have been a rallying-point for the patriotism of the provinces; and in the wise suspense of any constitution to succeed that Government until the enemy were chased from the field, all partisans--Imperialists, Legitimists, Orleanists, Republicans--would have equally adjourned their differences. But a democratic Republic, proclaimed by a Parisian mob for a nation in which sincere democratic Republicans are a handful, in contempt of an Assembly chosen by the country at large; headed by men in whom the provinces have no trust, and

for whom their own representatives are violently cashiered;--can you conceive such a combination of wet blankets supplied by the irony of Fate for the extinction of every spark of ardour in the population from which armies are to be gathered in haste, at the beck of usurers they distrust and despise? Paris has excelled itself in folly. Hungering for peace, it proclaims a Government which has no legal power to treat for it. Shrieking out for allies among the monarchies, it annihilates the hope of obtaining them; its sole chance of escape from siege, famine, and bombardment, is in the immediate and impassioned sympathy of the provinces; and it revives all the grudges which the provinces have long sullenly felt against the domineering pretensions of the capital, and invokes the rural populations, which comprise the pith and sinew of armies, in the name of men whom I verily believe they detest still more than they do the Prussians. Victor, it is enough to make one despair of his country! All beyond the hour seems anarchy and ruin."

"Not so!" exclaimed De Mauleon. "Everything comes to him who knows how to wait. The Empire is destroyed; the usurpation that follows it has no roots. It will but serve to expedite the establishment of such a condition as we have meditated and planned--a constitution adapted to our age and our people, not based wholly on untried experiments, taking the best from nations that do not allow Freedom and Order to be the sport of any popular breeze. From the American Republic we must borrow the only safeguards against the fickleness of the universal suffrage which, though it was madness to concede in any ancient community, once conceded cannot be safely abolished,--viz., the salutary law that no article of the Constitution, once settled, can be altered without the consent of two-thirds of the legislative body. By this law we insure permanence, and that concomitant love for institutions which is engendered by time and custom. Secondly, the formation of a senate on such principles as may secure to it in all times of danger a confidence and respect which counteract in public opinion the rashness and heat of the popular assembly. On what principles that senate should be formed, with what functions invested, what share of the executive--especially in foreign affairs, declarations of war, or treaties of peace--should be accorded to it, will no doubt need the most deliberate care of the ablest minds. But a senate I thus sketch has alone rescued America from the rashness of counsel incident to a democratic Chamber; and it is still more essential to France, with still more favourable elements for its creation. From England we must borrow the great principle that has alone saved her from revolution--that the head of the State can do no wrong. He leads no armies, he presides over no Cabinet. All responsibility rests with his advisers; and where we upset a dynasty, England changes an administration. Whether the head of the State should have the title of sovereign or president, whether he be hereditary or elected, is a question of minor importance impossible now to determine, but on which I heartily concur with you that hereditary monarchy is infinitely better adapted to the habits of Frenchmen, to their love of show and of honours--and infinitely more preservative from all the dangers which result from constant elections to such a dignity, with parties so heated, and pretenders to the rank so numerous--than any principle by which a popular demagogue or a successful general is enabled to destroy the institutions he is elected to guard. On these fundamental doctrines for the regeneration of France I think we are agreed. And I believe when the moment arrives to promulgate them, through an expounder of weight like yourself, they will rapidly commend themselves to the intellect of France. For they belong to common sense; and in the ultimate prevalence of common-sense I have a faith which I refuse to medievalists who would restore the right divine; and still more to fanatical quacks, who imagine

that the worship of the Deity, the ties of family, and the rights of property are errors at variance with the progress of society. _Qui vivera, verra_"

INCOGNITO.--"In the outlines of the policy you so ably enunciate I heartily concur. But if France is, I will not say to be regenerated, but to have fair play among the nations of Europe, I add one or two items to the programme. France must be saved from Paris, not by subterranean barracks and trains, the impotence of which we see to-day with a general in command of the military force, but by conceding to France its proportionate share of the power now monopolised by Paris. All this system of centralisation, equally tyrannical and corrupt, must be eradicated. Talk of examples from America, of which I know little--from England, of which I know much,--what can we more advantageously borrow from England than that diffusion of all her moral and social power which forbids the congestion of blood in one vital part? Decentralise! decentralise! decentralise! will be my incessant cry, if ever the time comes when my cry will be heard. France can never be a genuine France until Paris has no more influence over the destinies of France than London has over those of England. But on this theme I could go on till midnight. Now to the immediate point: what do you advise me to do in this crisis, and what do you propose to do yourself?"

De Mauleon put his hand to his brow, and remained a few moments silent and thoughtful. At last he looked up with that decided expression of face which was not the least among his many attributes for influence over those with whom he came into contact.

"For you, on whom so much of the future depends, my advice is brief--have nothing to do with the present. All who join this present mockery of a Government will share the fall that attends it--a fall from which one or two of their body may possibly recover by casting blame on their confreres,--you never could. But it is not for you to oppose that Government with an enemy on its march to Paris. You are not a soldier; military command is not in your rode. The issue of events is uncertain; but whatever it be, the men in power cannot conduct a prosperous war nor obtain an honourable peace. Hereafter you may be the _Deus ex machina_. No personage of that rank and with that mission appears till the end of the play: we are only in the first act. Leave Paris at once, and abstain from all action."

INCOGNITO (dejectedly).--"I cannot deny the soundness of your advice, though in accepting it I feel unutterably saddened. Still you, the calmest and shrewdest observer among my friends, think there is cause for hope, not despair. Victor, I have more than most men to make life pleasant, but I would lay down life at this moment with you. You know me well enough to be sure that I utter no melodramatic fiction when I say that I love my country as a young man loves the ideal of his dreams--with my whole mind and heart and soul! and the thought that I cannot now aid her in the hour of her mortal trial is--is--"

The man's voice broke down, and he turned aside, veiling his face with a hand that trembled.

DE MAULEON--"Courage--patience! All Frenchmen have the first; set them an example they much need in the second. I, too, love my country, though I owe to it little enough, heaven knows. I suppose love of country is inherent in all who are not Internationalists. They profess only to love humanity, by which, if they mean anything practical, they mean a rise in

wages."

INCOGNITO (rousing himself, and with a half smile). "Always cynical, Victor--always belying yourself. But now that you have advised my course, what will be your own? Accompany me, and wait for better times."

"No, noble friend; our positions are different. Yours is made--mine yet to make. But for this war I think I could have secured a seat in the Chamber. As I wrote you, I found that my kinsfolk were of much influence in their department, and that my restitution to my social grade, and the repute I had made as an Orleanist, inclined them to forget my youthful errors and to assist my career. But the Chamber ceases to exist. My journal I shall drop. I cannot support the Government; it is not a moment to oppose it. My prudent course is silence."

INCOGNITO.--"But is not your journal essential to your support?"

DE MAULEON.--"Fortunately not. Its profits enabled me to lay by for the rainy day that has come; and having reimbursed you and all friends the sums necessary to start it, I stand clear of all debt, and, for my slender wants, a rich man. If I continued the journal I should be beggared; for there would be no readers to Common Sense in this interval of lunacy. Nevertheless, during this interval, I trust to other ways for winning a name that will open my rightful path of ambition whenever we again have a legislature in which Common Sense can be heard."

INCOGNITO.--"But how win that name, silenced as a writer?"

DE MAULEON.--"You forget that I have fought in Algeria. In a few days Paris will be in a state of siege; and then--and then," he added, and very quietly dilated on the renown of a patriot or the grave of a soldier.

"I envy you the chance of either," said the Incognito; and after a few more brief words he departed, his hat drawn over his brows, and entering a hired carriage which he had left at the corner of the quiet street, was consigned to the station du -----, just in time for the next train.

CHAPTER XI.

Victor dressed and went out. The streets were crowded. Workmen were everywhere employed in the childish operation of removing all insignia, and obliterating all names that showed where an Empire had existed. One greasy citizen, mounted on a ladder, was effacing the words "Boulevard Haussman," and substituting for Haussman, "Victor Hugo."

Suddenly De Mauleon came on a group of blouses, interspersed with women holding babies and ragged boys holding stones, collected round a well-dressed slender man, at whom they were hooting and gesticulating, with menaces of doing something much worse. By an easy effort of his strong frame the Vicomte pushed his way through the tormentors, and gave his arm to their intended victim.

"Monsieur, allow me to walk home with you." Therewith the shrieks and shouts and gesticulations increased. "Another impertinent! Another traitor! Drown him! Drown them both! To the Seine! To the Seine!"

A burly fellow rushed forward, and the rest made a plunging push. The outstretched arm of De Mauleon kept the ringleader at bay. "Mes enfans," cried Victor with a calm clear voice, "I am not an Imperialist. Many of you have read the articles signed Pierre Firmin, written against the tyrant Bonaparte when he was at the height of his power. I am Pierre Firmin--make way for me." Probably not one in the crowd had ever read a word written by Pierre Firmin, nor even heard of the name. But they did not like to own ignorance; and that burly fellow did not like to encounter that arm of iron which touched his throat. So he cried out, "Oh! if you are the great Pierre Firmin, that alters the case. Make way for the patriot Pierre!" "But," shrieked a virago, thrusting her baby into De Mauleon's face, "the other is the Imperialist, the capitalist, the vile Duplessis. At least we will have him." De Mauleon suddenly snatched the baby from her, and said, with imperturbable good temper, "Exchange of prisoners. I resign the man, and I keep the baby."

No one who does not know the humours of a Parisian mob can comprehend the suddenness of popular change, or the magical mastery over crowds which is effected by quiet courage and a ready joke. The group was appeased at once. Even the virago laughed; and when De Mauleon restored the infant to her arms, with a gold piece thrust into its tiny clasp, she eyed the gold, and cried, "God bless you, citizen!" The two gentlemen made their way safely now.

"M. de Mauleon," said Duplessis, "I know not how to thank you. Without your seasonable aid I should have been in great danger of life; and--would you believe it?--the woman who denounced and set the mob on me was one of the objects of a charity which I weekly dispense to the poor."

"Of course I believe that. At the Red clubs no crime is more denounced than that of charity. It is the 'fraud against _Egalite_'--a vile trick of the capitalist to save to himself the millions he ought to share with all by giving a sou to one. Meanwhile, take my advice, M. Duplessis, and quit Paris with your young daughter. This is no place for rich Imperialists at present."

"I perceived that before to-day's adventure. I distrust the looks of my very servants, and shall depart with Valerie this evening for Bretagne."

"Ah! I heard from Louvier that you propose to pay off his mortgage on Rochebriant, and make yourself sole proprietor of my young kinsman's property."

"I trust you only believe half what you hear. I mean to save Rochebriant from Louvier, and consign it, free of charge, to your kinsman, as the dot of his bride, my daughter."

"I rejoice to learn such good news for the head of my house. But Alain himself--is he not with the prisoners of war?"

"No, thank heaven. He went forth an officer of a regiment of Parisian Mobiles--went full of sanguine confidence; he came back with his regiment in mournful despondency. The undiscipline of his regiment, of the Parisian Mobiles generally, appears incredible. Their insolent disobedience to their officers, their ribald scoffs at their general--oh, it is sickening to speak of it! Alain distinguished himself by repressing a mutiny and is honoured by a signal compliment from the commander in a letter of recommendation to Palikao. But Palikao is nobody now. Alain has already been sent into Bretagne, commissioned to

assist in organising a corps of Mables in his neighbourhood. Trochu, as you know, is a Breton. Alain is confident of the good conduct of the Bretons. What will Louvier do? He is an arch Republican; is he pleased now he has got what he wanted?"

"I suppose he is pleased, for he is terribly frightened. Fright is one of the great enjoyments of a Parisian. Good day. Your path to your hotel is clear now. Remember me kindly to Alain."

De Mauleon continued his way through streets sometimes deserted, sometimes thronged. At the commencement of the Rue de Florentin he encountered the brothers Vandemar walking arm in arm.

"Ha, De Mauleon!" cried Enguerrand; "what is the last minute's news?"

"I can't guess. Nobody knows at Paris how soon one folly swallows up another. Saturn here is always devouring one or other of his children."

"They say that Vinoy, after a most masterly retreat, is almost at our gates with 80,000 men."

"And this day twelvemonth we may know what he does with them."

Here Raoul, who seemed absorbed in gloomy reflections, halted before the hotel in which the Contessa di Rimini lodged, and with a nod to his brother, and a polite, if not cordial salutation to Victor, entered the _porte cochere_.

"Your brother seems out of spirits,--a pleasing contrast to the uproarious mirth with which Parisians welcome the advance of calamity."

"Raoul, as you know, is deeply religious. He regards the defeat we have sustained, and the peril that threatens us, as the beginning of a divine chastisement, justly incurred by our sins--I mean, the sins of Paris. In vain my father reminds him of Voltaire's story, in which the ship goes down with a _fripon_ on board. In order to punish the _fripon_, the honest folks are drowned."

"Is your father going to remain on board the ship, and share the fate of the other honest folks?"

"_Pas si bete_. He is off to Dieppe for sea-bathing. He says that Paris has grown so dirty since the 4th September, that it is only fit for the feet of the Unwashed. He wished my mother to accompany him; but she replies, 'No; there are already too many wounded not to need plenty of nurses.' She is assisting to inaugurate a society of ladies in aid of the _Soeurs de Charite_. Like Raoul, she is devout, but she has not his superstitions. Still his superstitions are the natural reaction of a singularly earnest and pure nature from the frivolity and corruption which, when kneaded well up together with a slice of sarcasm, Paris calls philosophy."

"And what, my dear Enguerrand, do you propose to do?"

"That depends on whether we are really besieged. If so, of course I become a soldier."

"I hope not a National Guard?"

"I care not in what name I fight, so that I fight for France."

As Enguerrand said these simple words, his whole countenance, seemed changed. The crest rose; his eyes sparkled; the fair and delicate beauty which had made him the darling of women--the joyous sweetness of expression and dainty grace of high breeding which made him the most popular companion to men,--were exalted in a masculine nobleness of aspect, from which a painter might have taken hints for a study of the young Achilles separated for ever from effeminate companionship at the sight of the weapons of war. De Mauleon gazed on him admiringly. We have seen that he shared the sentiments uttered--had resolved on the same course of action. But it was with the tempered warmth of a man who seeks to divest his thoughts and his purpose of the ardour of romance, and who, in serving his country, calculates on the gains to his own ambition. Nevertheless he admired in Enguerrand the image of his own impulsive and fiery youth.

"And you, I presume," resumed Enguerrand, "will fight too, but rather with pen than with sword."

"Pens will now only be dipped in red ink, and commonsense never writes in that colour; as for the sword, I have passed the age of forty-five, at which military service halts. But if some experience in active service, some knowledge of the art by which soldiers are disciplined and led, will be deemed sufficient title to a post of command, however modest the grade be, I shall not be wanting among the defenders of Paris."

"My brave dear Vicomte, if you are past the age to serve, you are in the ripest age to command; and with the testimonials and the cross you won in Algeria, your application for employment will be received with gratitude by any general so able as Trochu."

"I don't know whether I shall apply to Trochu. I would rather be elected to command even by the Mobiles or the National Guard, of whom I have just spoken disparagingly; and no doubt both corps will soon claim and win the right to choose their officers. But if elected, no matter by whom, I shall make a preliminary condition; the men under me shall train, and drill, and obey,--soldiers of a very different kind from the youthful Pekins nourished on absinthe and self-conceit, and applauding that Bombastes Furioso, M. Hugo, when he assures the enemy that Paris will draw an idea from its scabbard. But here comes Savarin. _Bon jour_, my dear poet."

"Don't say good day. An evil day for journalists and writers who do not out-Herod Blanqui and Pyat. I know not how I shall get bread and cheese. My poor suburban villa is to be pulled down by way of securing Paris; my journal will be suppressed by way of establishing the liberty of the press. I ventured to suggest that the people of France should have some choice in the form of their government."

"That was very indiscreet, my poor Savarin," said Victor; "I wonder your printing-office has not been pulled down. We are now at the moment when wise men hold their tongues."

"Perhaps so, M. de Mauleon. It might have been wiser for all of us, you as well as myself, if we had not allowed our tongues to be so free before this moment arrived. We live to learn; and if we ever have what may be called a passable government again, in which we may say pretty much what

we like, there is one thing I will not do, I will not undermine that government without seeing a very clear way to the government that is to follow it. What say you, Pierre Firmin?"

"Frankly, I say that I deserve your rebuke," answered De Mauleon thoughtfully. "But, of course, you are going to take or send Madame Savarin out of Paris."

"Certainly. We have made a very pleasant party for our hegira this evening--among others the Morleys. Morley is terribly disgusted. A Red Republican slapped him on the shoulder and said, 'American, we have a republic as well as you.' 'Pretty much you know about republics,' growled Morley; 'a French republic is as much like ours as a baboon is like a man.' On which the Red roused the mob, who dragged the American off to the nearest station of the National Guard, where he was accused of being a Prussian spy. With some difficulty, and lots of brag about the sanctity of the stars and stripes, he escaped with a reprimand, and caution how to behave himself in future. So he quits a city in which there no longer exists freedom of speech. My wife hoped to induce Mademoiselle Cicogna to accompany us; I grieve to say she refuses. You know she is engaged in marriage to Gustave Rameau; and his mother dreads the effect that these Red Clubs and his own vanity may have upon his excitable temperament if the influence of Mademoiselle Cicogna be withdrawn."

"How could a creature so exquisite as Isaura Cicogna ever find fascination in Gustave Rameau!" exclaimed Enguerrand.

"A woman like her," answered De Mauleon, "always finds a fascination in self-sacrifice."

"I think you divine the truth," said Savarin, rather mournfully. "But I must bid you good-bye. May we live to shake hands _reunis sons des meilleurs auspices_."

Here Savarin hurried off, and the other two men strolled into the Champs Elysees, which were crowded with loungers, gay and careless, as if there had been no disaster at Sedan, no overthrow of an Empire, no enemy on its road to Paris.

In fact the Parisians, at once the most incredulous and the most credulous of all populations, believed that the Prussians would never be so impertinent as to come in sight of the gates. Something would occur to stop them! The king had declared he did not war on Frenchmen, but on the Emperor: the Emperor gone, the war was over. A democratic republic was instituted. A horrible thing in its way, it is true; but how could the Pandour tyrant brave the infection of democratic doctrines among his own barbarian armies? Were not placards, addressed to our "German brethren," posted upon the walls of Paris, exhorting the Pandours to fraternise with their fellow-creatures? Was not Victor Hugo going to publish "a letter to the German people"? Had not Jules Favre graciously offered peace, with the assurance that "France would not cede a stone of her fortresses--an inch of her territory? She would pardon the invaders and not march upon Berlin!" To all these, and many more such incontestable proofs, that the idea of a siege was moonshine, did Enguerrand and Victor listen as they joined group after group of their fellow-countrymen: nor did Paris cease to harbour such pleasing illusions, amusing itself with piously laying crowns at the foot of the statue of Strasbourg, swearing "they would be worthy of their Alsatian

brethren," till on the 19th of September the last telegram was received, and Paris was cut off from the rest of the world by the iron line of the Prussian invaders. "Tranquil and terrible," says Victor Hugo, "she awaits the invasion! A volcano needs no assistance."

CHAPTER XII.

We left Graham Vane slowly recovering from the attack of fever which had arrested his journey to Berlin in quest of the Count von Rudesheim. He was, however, saved the prosecution of that journey, and his direction turned back to France by a German newspaper which informed him that the King of Prussia was at Rheims, and that the Count von Rudesheim was among the eminent personages gathered there around their sovereign. In conversing the same day with the kindly doctor who attended him, Graham ascertained that this German noble held a high command in the German armies, and bore a no less distinguished reputation as a wise political counsellor than he had earned as a military chief. As soon as he was able to travel, and indeed before the good doctor sanctioned his departure, Graham took his way to Rheims, uncertain, however, whether the Count would still be found there. I spare the details of his journey, interesting as they were. On reaching the famous and, in the eyes of Legitimists, the sacred city, the Englishman had no difficulty in ascertaining the house, not far from the cathedral, in which the Count von Rudesheim had taken his temporary abode. Walking towards it from the small hotel in which he had been lucky enough to find a room disengaged--slowly, for he was still feeble--he was struck by the quiet conduct of the German soldiery, and, save in their appearance, the peaceful aspect of the streets. Indeed, there was an air of festive gaiety about the place, as in an English town in which some popular regiment is quartered. The German soldiers thronged the shops, buying largely; lounged into the cafes; here and there attempted flirtations with the *grisettes*, who laughed at their French and blushed at their compliments; and in their good-humoured, somewhat bashful cheeriness, there was no trace of the insolence of conquest.

But as Graham neared the precincts of the cathedral his ear caught a grave and solemn music, which he at first supposed to come from within the building. But as he paused and looked round, he saw a group of the German military, on whose stalwart forms and fair manly earnest faces the setting sun cast its calm lingering rays. They were chanting, in voices not loud but deep, Luther's majestic hymn:

"Nun danket alle Gott." The chant awed even the ragged beggar boys who had followed the Englishman, as they followed any stranger, would have followed King William himself, whining for alms. "What a type of the difference between the two nations!" thought Graham; "the Marseillaise, and Luther's Hymn!" While thus meditating and listening, a man in a general's uniform came slowly out of the cathedral, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his head bent slightly downwards. He, too, paused on hearing the hymn; then unclasped his hand and beckoned to one of the officers, to whom approaching he whispered a word or two, and passed on towards the Episcopal palace. The hymn hushed, and the singers quietly dispersed. Graham divined rightly that the general had thought a hymn thanking the God of battles might wound the feelings of the inhabitants of the vanquished city--not, however, that any of them were likely to understand the language in which the thanks were uttered.

Graham followed the measured steps of the general, whose hands were again clasped behind his back--the musing habit of Von Moltke, as it had been of Napoleon the First. Continuing his way, the Englishman soon reached the house in which the Count von Rudesheim was lodged, and, sending in his card, was admitted at once through an anteroom in which sat two young men, subaltern officers apparently employed in draughting maps, into the presence of the Count.

"Pardon me," said Graham, after the first conventional salutation, "if I interrupt you for a moment or so in the midst of events so grave, on a matter that must seem to you very trivial."

"Nay," answered the Count, "there is nothing so trivial in this world but what there will be some one to whom it is important. Say how I can serve you."

"I think, M. le Comte, that you once received in your household, as teacher or governess, a French lady, Madame Marigny."

"Yes, I remember her well--a very handsome woman. My wife and daughter took great interest in her. She was married out of my house."

"Exactly--and to whom?"

"An Italian of good birth, who was then employed by the Austrian Government in some minor post, and subsequently promoted to a better one in the Italian dominion, which then belonged to the house of Hapsburg, after which we lost sight of him and his wife."

"An Italian--what was his name?"

"Ludovico Cicogna."

"Cicogna!" exclaimed Graham, turning very pale. "Are you sure that was the name?"

"Certainly. He was a cadet of a very noble house, and disowned by relations too patriotic to forgive him for accepting employment under the Austrian Government."

"Can you not give me the address of the place in Italy to which he was transferred on leaving Austria?"

"No; but if the information be necessary to you, it can be obtained easily at Milan, where the head of the family resides, or indeed in Vienna, through any ministerial bureau."

"Pardon me one or two questions more. Had Madame Marigny any children by a former husband?"

"Not that I know of: I never heard so. Signor Cicogna was a widower, and had, if I remember right, children by his first wife, who was also a Frenchwoman. Before he obtained office in Austria, he resided, I believe, in France. I do not remember how many children he had by his first wife. I never saw them. Our acquaintance began at the baths of Toplitz, where he saw and fell violently in love with Madame Marigny. After their marriage, they went to his post, which was somewhere, I think, in the Tyrol. We saw no more of them; but my wife and daughter kept up a correspondence with the Signora Cicogna for a short time. It

ceased altogether when she removed into Italy."

"You do not even know if the Signora is still living?"

"No."

"Her husband, I am told, is dead."

"Indeed! I am concerned to hear it. A good-looking, lively, clever man. I fear he must have lost all income when the Austrian dominions passed to the house of Savoy."

"Many thanks for your information. I can detain you no longer," said Graham, rising.

"Nay, I am not very busy at this moment; but I fear we Germans have plenty of work on our hands."

"I had hoped that, now the French Emperor, against whom your king made war, was set aside, his Prussian majesty would make peace with the French people."

"Most willingly would he do so if the French people would let him. But it must be through a French Government legally chosen by the people. And they have chosen none! A mob at Paris sets up a provisional administration, that commences by declaring that it will not give up 'an inch of its territory nor a stone of its fortresses.' No terms of peace can be made with such men holding such talk." After a few words more over the state of public affairs,--in which Graham expressed the English side of affairs, which was all for generosity to the vanquished; and the Count argued much more ably on the German, which was all for security against the aggressions of a people that would not admit itself to be vanquished,--the short interview closed.

As Graham at night pursued his journey to Vienna, there came into his mind Isaura's song of the Neapolitan fisherman. Had he, too, been blind to the image on the rock? Was it possible that all the while he had been resisting the impulse of his heart, until the discharge of the mission entrusted to him freed his choice and decided his fortunes, the very person of whom he was in search had been before him, then to be for ever won, lost to him now for ever? Could Isaura Cicogna be the child of Louise Duval by Richard King? She could not have been her child by Cicogna: the dates forbade that hypothesis. Isaura must have been five years old when Louise married the Italian. Arrived at Milan, Graham quickly ascertained that the post to which Ludovico Cicogna had been removed was in Verona, and that he had there died eight years ago. Nothing was to be learned as to his family or his circumstances at the time of his death. The people of whose history we know the least are the relations we refuse to acknowledge. Graham continued his journey to Verona. There he found on inquiry that the Cicognas had occupied an apartment in a house which stood at the outskirts of the town and had been since pulled down to make way for some public improvements. But his closest inquiries could gain him no satisfactory answers to the all-important questions as to Ludovico Cicogna's family. His political alienation from the Italian cause, which was nowhere more ardently espoused than at Verona, had rendered him very unpopular. He visited at no Italian houses. Such society as he had was confined to the Austrian military within the Quadrilateral or at Venice, to which city he made frequent excursions: was said to lead there a free and gay life, very

displeasing to the Signora, whom he left in Verona. She was but little seen, and faintly remembered as very handsome and proud-looking. Yes, there were children--a girl, and a boy several years younger than the girl; but whether she was the child of the Signora by a former marriage, or whether the Signora was only the child's stepmother, no one could say. The usual clue, in such doubtful matters obtainable through servants, was here missing. The Cicognas had only kept two servants, and both were Austrian subjects, who had long left the country,--their very names forgotten.

Graham now called to mind the Englishman Selby, for whom Isaura had such grateful affection, as supplying to her the place of her father. This must have been the Englishman whom Louise Duval had married after Cicogna's death. It would be no difficult task, surely, to ascertain where he had resided. Easy enough to ascertain all that Graham wanted to know from Isaura herself, if a letter could reach her. But, as he knew by the journals, Paris was now invested--cut off from all communication with the world beyond. Too irritable, anxious, and impatient to wait for the close of the siege, though he never suspected it could last so long as it did, he hastened to Venice, and there learned through the British consul that the late Mr. Selby was a learned antiquarian, an accomplished general scholar, a *fanatico* in music, a man of gentle temper though reserved manners; had at one time lived much at Venice: after his marriage with the Signora Cicogna he had taken up his abode near Florence. To Florence Graham now went. He found the villa on the skirts of Fiesole at which Mr. Selby had resided. The peasant who had officiated as gardener and shareholder in the profits of vines and figs, was still, with his wife, living on the place. Both man and wife remembered the Inglese well; spoke of him with great affection, of his wife with great dislike. They said her manners were very haughty, her temper very violent; that she led the Inglese a very unhappy life; that there were a girl and a boy, both hers by a former marriage; but when closely questioned whether they were sure that the girl was the Signora's child by the former husband, or whether she was not the child of that husband by a former wife, they could not tell; they could only say that both were called by the same name--Cicogna; that the boy was the Signora's favourite--that indeed she seemed wrapt up in him; that he died of a rapid decline a few months after Mr. Selby had hired the place, and that shortly after his death the Signora left the place and never returned to it; that it was little more than a year that she had lived with her husband before this final separation took place. The girl remained with Mr. Selby, who cherished and loved her as his own child. Her Christian name was Isaura, the boy's Luigi. A few years later, Mr. Selby left the villa and went to Naples, where they heard he had died. They could give no information as to what had become of his wife: Since the death of her boy that lady had become very much changed--her spirits quite broken, no longer violent. She would sit alone and weep bitterly. The only person out of her family she would receive was the priest; till the boy's death she had never seen the priest, nor been known to attend divine service.

"Was the priest living?"

"Oh, no; he had been dead two years. A most excellent man--a saint," said the peasant's wife.

"Good priests are like good women," said the peasant, drily; "there are plenty of them, but they are all underground."

On which remark the wife tried to box his ears. The contadino had become a freethinker since the accession of the house of Savoy. His wife remained a good Catholic. Said the peasant as, escaping from his wife, he walked into the high-road with Graham, "My belief, Eccellenza, is, that the priest did all the mischief."

"What mischief?"

"Persuaded the Signora to leave her husband. The Inglese was not a Catholic. I heard the priest call him a heretic. And the padre, who, though not so bad as some of his cloth, was a meddling bigot, thought it perhaps best for her soul that it should part company with a heretic's person. I can't say for sure, but I think that was it. The padre seemed to triumph when the Signora was gone." Graham mused. The peasant's supposition was not improbable. A woman such as Louise Duval appeared to be--of vehement passions and ill-regulated mind--was just one of those who, in a moment of great sorrow, and estranged from the ordinary household affections, feel, though but imperfectly, the necessity of a religion, and, ever in extremes, pass at once from indifferentism into superstition.

Arrived at Naples, Graham heard little of Selby except as a literary recluse, whose only distraction from books was the operatic stage. But he heard much of Isaura; of the kindness which Madame de Grantmesnil had shown to her, when left by Selby's death alone in the world; of the interest which the friendship and the warm eulogies of one so eminent as the great French writer had created for Isaura in the artistic circles; of the intense sensation her appearance, her voice, her universal genius, had made in that society, and the brilliant hopes of her subsequent career on the stage the cognoscenti had formed. No one knew anything of her mother; no one entertained a doubt that Isaura was by birth a Cicogna. Graham could not learn the present whereabouts of Madame de Grantmesnil. She had long left Naples, and had been last heard of at Genoa; was supposed to have returned to France a little before the war. In France she had no fixed residence.

The simplest mode of obtaining authentic information whether Isaura was the daughter of Ludovico Cicogna by his first wife--namely, by registration of her birth--failed him; because, as von Rudesheim had said, his first wife was a Frenchwoman. The children had been born somewhere in France, no one could even guess where. No one had ever seen the first wife, who had never appeared in Italy, nor had even heard what was her maiden name.

Graham, meanwhile, was not aware that Isaura was still in the besieged city, whether or not already married to Gustave Rameau; so large a number of the women had quitted Paris before the siege began, that he had reason to hope she was among them. He heard through an American that the Morleys had gone to England before the Prussian investment; perhaps Isaura had gone with them. He wrote to Mrs. Morley, inclosing his letter to the Minister of the United States at the Court of St. James's, and while still at Naples received her answer. It was short, and malignantly bitter. "Both myself and Madame Savarin, backed by Signora Venosta, earnestly entreated Mademoiselle Cicogna to quit Paris, to accompany us to England. Her devotion to her affianced husband would not permit her to listen to us. It is only an Englishman who could suppose Isaura Cicogna to be one of those women who do not insist on sharing the perils of those they love. You ask whether she was the daughter of Ludovico Cicogna by his former marriage, or of his second wife by him. I cannot

answer. I don't even know whether Signor Cicogna ever had a former wife. Isaura Cicogna never spoke to me of her parents. Permit me to ask--what business is it of yours now? Is it the English pride that makes you wish to learn whether on both sides she is of noble family? How can that discovery alter your relations towards the affianced bride of another?"

On receipt of this letter, Graham quitted Naples, and shortly afterwards found himself at Versailles. He obtained permission to establish himself there, though the English were by no means popular. Thus near to Isaura, thus sternly separated from her, Graham awaited the close of the siege. Few among those at Versailles believed that the Parisians would endure it much longer. Surely they would capitulate before the bombardment, which the Germans themselves disliked to contemplate as a last resource, could commence.

In his own mind Graham was convinced that Isaura was the child of Richard King. It seemed to him probable that Louise Duval, unable to assign any real name to the daughter of the marriage she disowned,--neither the name borne by the repudiated husband, nor her own maiden name,--would, on taking her daughter to her new home, have induced Cicogna to give the child his name, or that after Cicogna's death she herself had so designated the girl. A dispassionate confidant, could Graham have admitted any confidant whatever, might have suggested the more than equal probability that Isaura was Cicogna's daughter by his former espousal. But then what could have become of Richard King's child? To part with the fortune in his hands, to relinquish all the ambitious dreams which belonged to it, cost Graham Vane no pang: but he writhed with indignant grief when he thought that the wealth of Richard King's heiress was to pass to the hands of Gustave Rameau,--that this was to be the end of his researches--this the result of the sacrifice his sense of honour imposed on him. And now that there was the probability that he must convey to Isaura this large inheritance, the practical difficulty of inventing some reason for such a donation, which he had, while at a distance made light of, became seriously apparent. How could he say to Isaura that he had £200,000. in trust for her, without naming any one so devising it? Still more, how constitute himself her guardian, so as to secure it to herself, independently of her husband? Perhaps Isaura was too infatuated with Rameau, or too romantically unselfish, to permit the fortune so mysteriously conveyed being exclusively appropriated to herself. And if she were already married to Rameau, and if he were armed with the right to inquire into the source of this fortune, how exposed to the risks of disclosure would become the secret Graham sought to conceal. Such a secret affecting the memory of the sacred dead, affixing a shame on the scutcheon of the living, in the irreverent hands of a Gustave Rameau,--it was too dreadful to contemplate such a hazard. And yet, if Isaura were the missing heiress, could Graham Vane admit any excuse for basely withholding from her, for coolly retaining to himself the wealth for which he was responsible? Yet, torturing as were these communings with himself, they were mild in their torture compared to the ever-growing anguish of the thought that in any case the only woman he had ever loved--ever could love,--who might but for his own scruples and prejudices have been the partner of his life, was perhaps now actually the wife of another, and, as such, in what terrible danger! Famine within the walls of the doomed city: without, the engines of death waiting for a signal. So near to her, and yet so far! So willing to die for her, if for her he could not live: and with all his devotion, all his intellect, all his wealth, so powerless!

CHAPTER XIII.

It is now the middle of November—a Sunday. The day has been mild, and is drawing towards its close. The Parisians have been enjoying the sunshine. Under the leafless trees in the public gardens and the Champs Elysees children have been at play. On the Boulevards the old elegance of gaiety is succeeded by a livelier animation. Itinerant musicians gather round them ragged groups. Fortune-tellers are in great request, especially among the once brilliant Laises and Thaises, now looking more shabby, to whom they predict the speedy restoration of Nabobs and Russians, and golden joys. Yonder Punch is achieving a victory over the Evil One, who wears the Prussian spiked helmet, and whose face has been recently beautified into a resemblance to Bismarck. Punch draws to his show a laughing audience of Moblots and recruits to the new companies of the National Guard. Members of the once formidable police, now threadbare and hunger-pinched, stand side by side with unfortunate beggars and sinister-looking patriots who have served their time in the jails or galleys.

Uniforms of all variety are conspicuous—the only evidence visible of an enemy at the walls. But the aspects of the wearers of warlike accoutrements are debonnaire and smiling, as of revellers on a holiday of peace. Among these defenders of their country, at the door of a crowded cafe, stands Frederic Lemerrier, superb in the costume, bran-new, of a National Guard,—his dog Fox tranquilly reposing on its haunches, with eyes fixed upon its fellow-dog philosophically musing on the edge of Punch's show, whose master is engaged in the conquest of the Bismarck fiend.

"Lemerrier," cried the Vicomte de Breze, approaching the cafe, "I scarcely recognise you in that martial guise. You look magnifique--the galons become you. Peste! an officer already?"

"The National Guards and Mobiles are permitted to choose their own officers, as you are aware. I have been elected, but to subaltern grade, by the warlike patriots of my department. Enguerrand de Vandemar is elected a captain of the Mobiles in his, and Victor de Mauleon is appointed to the command of a battalion of the National Guards. But I soar above jealousy at such a moment,—

"Rome a choisi mon bras; je n'examine rien."

"You have no right to be jealous. De Mauldon has had experience and won distinction in actual service, and from all I hear is doing wonders with his men—has got them not only to keep but to love drill. I heard no less an authority than General V---- say that if all the officers of the National Guard were like De Mauleon, that body would give an example of discipline to the line."

"I say nothing as to the promotion of a real soldier like the Vicomte--but a Parisian dandy like Euguerrand de Vande--"

"You forget that Enguerrand received a military education—an advantage denied to you."

"What does that matter? Who cares for education nowadays? Besides, have I not been training ever since the 4th of September, to say nothing of

the hard work on the ramparts?"

"_Parlez moi de cela_ it is indeed hard work on the ramparts. _Infandum dolorem quorum pars magna fui_. Take the day duty. What with rising at seven o'clock, and being drilled between a middle-aged and corpulent grocer on one side and a meagre beardless barber's apprentice on the other; what with going to the bastions at eleven, and seeing half one's companions drunk before twelve; what with trying to keep their fists off one's face when one politely asks them not to call one's general a traitor or a poltroon,--the work of the ramparts would be insupportable, if I did not take a pack of cards with me, and enjoy a quiet rubber with three other heroes in some sequestered corner. As for night work, nothing short of the indomitable fortitude of a Parisian could sustain it; the tents made expressly not to be waterproof, like the groves of the Muses,

"" per
Quos et aquea subeant et aurae.'

A fellow-companion of mine tucks himself up on my rug, and pillows his head on my knapsack. I remonstrate--he swears--the other heroes wake up and threaten to thrash us both; and just when peace is made, and one hopes for a wink of sleep, a detachment of spectators, chiefly gamins, coming to see that all is safe in the camp, strike up the Marseillaise. Ah, the world will ring to the end of time with the sublime attitude of Paris in the face of the Vandal invaders, especially when it learns that the very shoes we stand in are made of cardboard. In vain we complain. The contractor for shoes is a staunch Republican, and jobs by right divine. May I ask if you have dined yet?"

"Heavens! no, it is too early. But I am excessively hungry. I had only a quarter of jugged cat for breakfast, and the brute was tough. In reply to your question, may I put another--Did you lay in plenty of stores?"

"Stores? no; I am a bachelor, and rely on the stores of my married friends."

"Poor De Breze! I sympathise with you, for I am in the same boat, and dinner invitations have become monstrous rare."

"Oh, but you are so confoundedly rich! What to you are forty francs for a rabbit, or eighty francs for a turkey?"

"Well, I suppose I am rich, but I have no money, and the ungrateful restaurants will not give me credit. They don't believe in better days."

"How can you want money?"

"Very naturally. I had invested my capital famously--the best speculations--partly in house rents, partly in company shares; and houses pay no rents, and nobody will buy company shares. I had 1,000 napoleons on hand, it is true, when Duplessis left Paris--much more, I thought, than I could possibly need, for I never believed in the siege. But during the first few weeks I played at whist with bad luck, and since then so many old friends have borrowed of me that I doubt if I have 200 francs left. I have despatched four letters to Duplessis by pigeon and balloon, entreating him to send me 25,000 francs by some trusty fellow who will pierce the Prussian lines. I have had two answers: 1st, that he

will find a man; 2nd, that the man is found and on his way. Trust to that man, my dear friend, and meanwhile lend me 200 francs."

"_Mon cher, desole_ to refuse; but I was about to ask you to share your 200 francs with me who live chiefly by my pen; and that resource is cut off. Still, _il faut vivre_--one must dine."

"That is a fact, and we will dine together to-day at my expense; limited liability, though--eight francs a head."

"Generous Monsieur, I accept. Meanwhile let us take a turn towards the Madeleine."

The two Parisians quit the cafe, and proceed up the Boulevard. On their way they encounter Savarin. "Why," said De Breze, "I thought you had left Paris with Madame."

"So I did, and deposited her safely with the Morleys at Boulogne. These kind Americans were going to England, and they took her with them. But I quit Paris! No: I am old; I am growing obese. I have always been short-sighted. I can neither wield a sword nor handle a musket. But Paris needs defenders; and every moment I was away from her I sighed to myself, '_il faut etre la_' I returned before the Vandals had possessed themselves of our railways, the _convoi_ overcrowded with men like myself, who had removed wives and families; and when we asked each other why we went back, every answer was the same, '_il faut etre la_.' No, poor child, no--I have nothing to give you."

These last words were addressed to a woman young and handsome, with a dress that a few weeks ago might have been admired for taste and elegance by the lady leaders of the ton, but was now darned, and dirty, and draggled.

"Monsieur, I did not stop you to ask for alms. You do not seem to remember me, M. Savarin."

"But I do," said Lemercier, "surely I address Mademoiselle Julie Caumartin."

"Ah, excuse me, _le petit_ Frederic," said Julie with a sickly attempt at coquettish sprightliness; "I had no eyes except for M. Savarin."

"And why only for me, my poor child?" asked the kindhearted author.

"Hush!" She drew him aside. "Because you can give me news of that monster Gustave. It is not true, it cannot be true, that he is going to be married?"

"Nay, surely, Mademoiselle, all connection between you and young Rameau has ceased for months--ceased from the date of that illness in July which nearly carried him off."

"I resigned him to the care of his mother," said the girl; "but when he no longer needs a mother, he belongs to me. Oh, consider, M. Savarin, for his sake I refused the most splendid offers! When he sought me, I had my _coupe_, my opera-box, my _cachemires_, my jewels. The Russians--the English--vied for my smiles. But I loved the man. I never loved before: I shall never love again; and after the sacrifices I have made for him, nothing shall induce me to give him up. Tell me, I entreat, my

dear M. Savarin, where he is hiding. He has left the parental roof, and they refused there to give me his address."

"My poor girl, don't be _mechante_. It is quite true that Gustave Rameau is engaged to be married; and any attempt of yours to create scandal--"

"Monsieur," interrupted Julie, vehemently, "don't talk to me about scandal! The man is mine, and no one else shall have him. His address?"

"Mademoiselle," cried Savarin, angrily, "find it out for yourself." Then--repentant of rudeness to one so young and so desolate--he added, in mild expostulatory accents: "Come, come, _ma belle enfant_, be reasonable: Gustave is no loss. He is reduced to poverty."

"So much the better. When he was well off I never cost him more than a supper at the _Maison Doree_; and if he is poor he shall marry me, and I will support him!"

"You!--and how?"

"By my profession when peace comes; and meanwhile I have offers from a _cafe_ to recite warlike songs. Ah! you shake your head incredulously. The ballet-dancer recite verses? Yes! he taught me to recite his own _Soyez bon pour moi_. M. Savarin! do say where I can find _mon homme_."

"No."

"That is your last word?"

"It is."

The girl drew her thin shawl round her and hurried off. Savarin rejoined his friends. "Is that the way you console yourself for the absence of Madame?" asked De Breze, drily.

"Fie!" cried Savarin, indignantly; "such bad jokes are ill-timed. What strange mixtures of good and bad, of noble and base, every stratum of Paris life contains! There is that poor girl, in one way contemptible, no doubt, and yet in another way she has an element of grandeur. On the whole, at Paris, the women, with all their faults, are of finer mould than the men."

"French gallantry has always admitted that truth," said Lemercier. "Fox, Fox, Fox." Uttering this cry, he darted forward after the dog, who had strayed a few yards to salute another dog led by a string, and caught the animal in his arms. "Pardon me," he exclaimed, returning to his friends, "but there are so many snares for dogs at present. They are just coming into fashion for roasts, and Fox is so plump."

"I thought," said Savarin, "that it was resolved at all the sporting clubs that, be the pinch of famine ever so keen, the friend of man should not be eaten."

"That was while the beef lasted; but since we have come to cats, who shall predict immunity to dogs? _Quid intactum nefasti linquimus_? Nothing is sacred from the hand of rapine."

The church of the Madeleine now stood before them. _Moblots_ were playing pitch-and-toss on its steps.

"I don't wish you to accompany me, Messieurs," said Lemercier, apologetically, "but I am going to enter the church."

"To pray?" asked De Breze, in profound astonishment. "Not exactly; but I want to speak to my friend Rochebriant, and I know I shall find him there."

"Praying?" again asked De Breze.

"Yes."

"That is curious--a young Parisian exquisite at prayer--that is worth seeing. Let us enter, too, Savarin."

They enter the church. It is filled, and even the sceptical De Breze is impressed and awed by the sight. An intense fervour pervades the congregation. The majority, it is true, are women, many of them in deep mourning, and many of their faces mourning deeper than the dress. Everywhere may be seen gushing tears, and everywhere faintly heard the sound of stifled sighs. Besides the women are men of all ages--young, middle-aged, old, with heads bowed and hands clasped, pale, grave, and earnest. Most of them were evidently of the superior grade of life--nobles, and the higher bourgeoisie: few of the ouvrier class, very few, and these were of an earlier generation. I except soldiers, of whom there were many, from the provincial Mobiles, chiefly Bretons; you know the Breton soldiers by the little cross worn on their kepis.

Among them Lemercier at once distinguished the noble countenance of Alain de Rochebriant. De Breze and Savarin looked at each other with solemn eyes. I know not when either had last been within a church; perhaps both were startled to find that religion still existed in Paris--and largely exist it does, though little seen on the surface of society, little to be estimated by the articles of journals and the reports of foreigners. Unhappily, those among whom it exists are not the ruling class--are of the classes that are dominated over and obscured in every country the moment the populace becomes master. And at that moment the journals chiefly read were warring more against the Deity than the Prussians--were denouncing soldiers who attended mass. "The Gospel certainly makes a bad soldier," writes the patriot Pyat.

Lemercier knelt down quietly. The other two men crept noiselessly out, and stood waiting for him on the steps, watching the Moblots (Parisian Moblots) at play.

"I should not wait for the roturier if he had not promised me a roti," said the Vicomte de Breze, with a pitiful attempt at the patrician wit of the ancien regime.

Savarin shrugged his shoulders. "I am not included in the invitation," said he, "and therefore free to depart. I must go and look up a former confrere who was an enthusiastic Red Republican, and I fear does not get so much to eat since he has no longer an Emperor to abuse."

So Savarin went away. A few minutes afterwards Lemercier emerged from the church with Alain.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I knew I should find you in the Madeleine," said Lemercier, "and I wished much to know when you had news from Duplessis. He and your fair fiancée are with your aunt still staying at Rochebriant?"

"Certainly. A pigeon arrived this morning with a few lines. All well there."

"And Duplessis thinks, despite the war, that he shall be able, when the time comes, to pay Louvier the mortgage-sum?"

"He never doubts that. His credit in London is so good. But of course all works of improvement are stopped."

"Pray did he mention me?--anything about the messenger who was to pierce the Prussian lines?"

"What! has the man not arrived? It is two weeks since he left."

"The Uhlans have no doubt shot him--the assassins, and drunk up my 25,000 francs--the thieves."

"I hope not. But in case of delay, Duplessis tells me I am to remit to you 2,000 francs for your present wants. I will send them to you this evening."

"How the deuce do you possess such a sum?"

"I came from Brittany with a purse well filled. Of course I could have no scruples in accepting money from my destined father-in-law."

"And you can spare this sum?"

"Certainly--the State now provides for me; I am in command of a Breton company."

"True. Come and dine with me and De Breze."

"Alas! I cannot. I have to see both the Vandemars before I return to the camp for the night. And now--hush--come this way (drawing Frederic further from De Breze), I have famous news for you. A sortie on a grand scale is imminent; in a few days we may hope for it."

"I have heard that so often that I am incredulous."

"Take it as a fact now."

"What! Trochu has at last matured his plan?"

"He has changed its original design, which was to cut through the Prussian lines to Rouen, occupying there the richest country for supplies, guarding the left bank of the Seine and a watercourse to convoy them to Paris. The incidents of war prevented that: he has a better plan now. The victory of the army of the Loire at Orleans opens a new enterprise. We shall cut our way through the Prussians, join that army, and with united forces fall on the enemy at the rear. Keep this a secret as yet, but rejoice with me that we shall prove to the invaders what men

who fight for their native soil can do under the protection of Heaven."

"Fox, Fox, mon cheri," said Lemercier, as he walked towards the cafe Riche with De Breze; "thou shalt have a festin de Balthazar under the protection of Heaven."

CHAPTER XV.

On leaving Lemercier and De Breze, Savarin regained the Boulevard, and pausing every now and then to exchange a few words with acquaintances--the acquaintances of the genial author were numerous--turned into the quartier Chaussee d'Antin, and gaining a small neat house, with a richly-ornamented facade, mounted very clean, well-kept stairs to a third story. On one of the doors on the landing-place was nailed a card, inscribed, "Gustave Rameau, homme de lettres." Certainly it is not usual in Paris thus to afficher one's self as a "man of letters"? But Genius scorns what is usual. Had not Victor Hugo left in the hotel-books on the Rhine his designation "homme de lettres"? Did not the heir to one of the loftiest houses in the peerage of England, and who was also a first-rate amateur in painting, inscribe on his studio when in Italy, "--artiste"? Such examples, no doubt, were familiar to Gustave Rameau, and "homme de lettres" was on the scrap of pasteboard nailed to his door.

Savarin rang; the door opened, and Gustave appeared. The poet was, of course, picturesquely attired. In his day of fashion he had worn within doors a very pretty fanciful costume, designed after portraits of the young Raffaele; that costume he had preserved--he wore it now. It looked very threadbare, and the pourpoint very soiled. But the beauty of the poet's face had survived the lustre of the garments. True, thanks to absinthe, the cheeks had become somewhat puffy and bloated. Grey was distinctly visible in the long ebon tresses. But still the beauty of the face was of that rare type which a Thorwaldsen or a Gibson seeking a model for a Narcissus would have longed to fix into marble.

Gustave received his former chief with a certain air of reserved dignity; led him into his chamber, only divided by a curtain from his accommodation for washing and slumber, and placed him in an arm-chair beside a drowsy fire--fuel had already become very dear.

"Gustave," said Savarin, "are you in a mood favourable to a little serious talk?"

"Serious talk from M. Savarin is a novelty too great not to command my profoundest interest."

"Thank you,--and to begin: I who know the world and mankind advise you, who do not, never to meet a man who wishes to do you a kindness with an ungracious sarcasm. Irony is a weapon I ought to be skilled in, but weapons are used against enemies, and it is only a tyro who flourishes his rapier in the face of his friends."

"I was not aware that M. Savarin still permitted me to regard him as a friend."

"Because I discharged the duties of friend--remonstrated, advised, and

warned. However, let bygones be bygones. I entreated you not to quit the safe shelter of the paternal roof. You insisted on doing so. I entreated you not to send to one of the most ferocious of the Red, or rather, the Communistic, journals, articles, very eloquent, no doubt, but which would most seriously injure you in the eyes of quiet, orderly people, and compromise your future literary career for the sake of a temporary flash in the pan during a very evanescent period of revolutionary excitement. You scorned my adjurations, but at all events you had the grace not to append your true name to those truculent effusions. In literature, if literature revive in France, we two are henceforth separated. But I do not forego the friendly interest I took in you in the days when you were so continually in my house. My wife, who liked you so cordially, implored me to look after you during her absence from Paris, and, *_enfin, mon pauvre garcon_*, it would grieve me very much if, when she comes back, I had to say to her, 'Gustave Rameau has thrown away the chance of redemption and of happiness which you deemed was secure to him.' *_A l'oeil malade, la lumiere nuit_*."

So saying, he held out his hand kindly.

Gustave, who was far from deficient in affectionate or tender impulses, took the hand respectfully, and pressed it warmly.

"Forgive me if I have been ungracious, M. Savarin, and vouchsafe to hear my explanation."

"Willingly, *_mon garcon_*."

"When I became convalescent, well enough to leave my father's house, there were circumstances which compelled me to do so. A young man accustomed to the life of a *_garcon_* can't be always tied to his mother's apron-strings."

"Especially if the apron-pocket does not contain a bottle of absinthe," said Savarin, drily. "You may well colour and try to look angry; but I know that the doctor strictly forbade the use of that deadly *_liqueur_*, and enjoined your mother to keep strict watch on your liability to its temptations. And hence one cause of your ennui under the paternal roof. But if there you could not imbibe absinthe, you were privileged to enjoy a much diviner intoxication. There you could have the foretaste of domestic bliss--the society of the girl you loved, and who was pledged to become your wife. Speak frankly. Did not that society itself begin to be wearisome?"

"No," cried Gustave, eagerly, "it was not wearisome--"

"Yes, but--"

"But it could not be all-sufficing to a soul of fire like mine."

"Hem," murmured Savarin--"a soul of fire! This is very interesting; pray go on."

"The calm, cold, sister-like affection of a childish undeveloped nature, which knew no passion except for art, and was really so little emancipated from the nursery as to take for serious truth all the old myths of religion--such companionship may be very soothing and pleasant when one is lying on one's sofa, and must live by rule, but when one regains the vigour of youth and health--"

"Do not pause," said Savarin, gazing with more compassion than envy on that melancholy impersonation of youth and health. "When one regains that vigour of which I myself have no recollection, what happens?"

"The thirst for excitement, the goads of ambition, the irresistible claims which the world urges upon genius, return."

"And that genius, finding itself at the North Pole amid Cimmerian darkness in the atmosphere of a childish intellect--in other words, the society of a pure-minded virgin, who, though a good romance-writer, writes nothing but what a virgin may read, and, though a *bel esprit*, says her prayers and goes to church--then genius--well, pardon my ignorance, what does genius do?"

"Oh, M. Savarin, M. Savarin! don't let us talk any more. There is no sympathy between us. I cannot bear that bloodless, mocking, cynical mode of dealing with grand emotions, which belongs to the generation of the Doctrinaires. I am not a Thiers or a Guizot."

"Good heavens! who ever accused you of being either? I did not mean to be cynical. Mademoiselle Cicogna has often said I am, but I did not think you would. Pardon me. I quite agree with the philosopher who asserted that the wisdom of the past was an imposture, that the meanest intellect now living is wiser than the greatest intellect which is buried in Pere la Chaise; because the dwarf who follows the giant, when perched on the shoulders of the giant, sees farther than the giant ever could. *Allez*. I go in for your generation. I abandon Guizot and Thiers. Do condescend and explain to my dull understanding, as the inferior mortal of a former age, what are the grand emotions which impel a soul of fire in your wiser generation. The thirst of excitement--what excitement? The goads of ambition--what ambition?"

"A new social system is struggling from the dissolving elements of the old one, as, in the fables of priestcraft, the soul frees itself from the body which has become ripe for the grave. Of that new system I aspire to be a champion--a leader. Behold the excitement that allures me, the ambition that goads."

"Thank you," said Savarin, meekly; "I am answered. I recognise the dwarf perched on the back of the giant. Quitting these lofty themes, I venture to address to you now one simple matter-of-fact question: How about Mademoiselle Cicogna? Do you think you can induce her to transplant herself to the new social system, which I presume will abolish, among other obsolete myths, the institution of marriage?"

"M. Savarin, your question offends me. Theoretically I am opposed to the existing superstitions that encumber the very simple principle by which may be united two persons so long as they desire the union, and separated so soon as the union becomes distasteful to either. But I am perfectly aware that such theories would revolt a young lady like Mademoiselle Cicogna. I have never even named them to her, and our engagement holds good."

"Engagement of marriage? No period for the ceremony fixed?"

"That is not my fault. I urged it on Isaura with all earnestness before I left my father's house."

"That was long after the siege had begun. Listen to me, Gustave. No persuasion of mine or my wife's, nor Mrs. Morley's, could induce Isaura to quit Paris while it was yet time. She said very simply that, having pledged her truth and hand to you, it would be treason to honour and duty if she should allow any considerations for herself to be even discussed so long as you needed her presence. You were then still suffering, and, though convalescent, not without danger of a relapse. And your mother said to her--I heard the words: 'Tis not for his bodily health I could dare to ask you to stay, when every man who can afford it is sending away his wife, sisters, daughters. As for that, I should suffice to tend him; but if you go, I resign all hope for the health of his mind and his soul.' I think at Paris there may be female poets and artists whom that sort of argument would not have much influenced. But it so happens that Isaura is not a Parisienne. She believes in those old myths which you think fatal to sympathies with yourself; and those old myths also lead her to believe that where a woman has promised she will devote her life to a man, she cannot forsake him when told by his mother that she is necessary to the health of his mind and his soul. Stay. Before you interrupt me, let me finish what I have to say. It appears that, so soon as your bodily health was improved, you felt that your mind and your soul could take care of themselves; and certainly it seems to me that Isaura Cicogna is no longer of the smallest use to either."

Rameau was evidently much disconcerted by this speech. He saw what Savarin was driving at--the renunciation of all bond between Isaura and himself. He was not prepared for such renunciation. He still felt for the Italian as much of love as he could feel for any woman who did not kneel at his feet, as at those of Apollo condescending to the homage of Arcadian maids. But on the one hand, he felt that many circumstances had occurred since the disaster at Sedan to render Isaura a very much less desirable *_partie_* than she had been when he had first wrung from her the pledge of betrothal. In the palmy times of a Government in which literature and art commanded station and insured fortune, Isaura, whether as authoress or singer, was a brilliant marriage for Gustave Rameau. She had also then an assured and competent, if modest, income. But when times change, people change with them. As the income for the moment (and Heaven only can say how long that moment might last), Isaura's income had disappeared. It will be recollected that Louvier had invested her whole fortune in the houses to be built in the street called after his name. No houses, even when built, paid any rent now. Louvier had quitted Paris; and Isaura could only be subsisting upon such small sum as she might have had in hand before the siege commenced. All career in such literature and art as Isaura adorned was at a dead stop. Now, to do Rameau justice, he was by no means an avaricious or mercenary man. But he yearned for modes of life to which money was essential. He liked his "comforts;" and his comforts included the luxuries of elegance and show-comforts not to be attained by marriage with Isaura under existing circumstances.

Nevertheless it is quite true that he had urged her to marry him at once, before he had quitted his father's house; and her modest shrinking from such proposal, however excellent the reasons for delay in the national calamities of the time, as well as the poverty which the calamity threatened, had greatly wounded his *_amour propre_*. He had always felt that her affection for him was not love; and though he could reconcile himself to that conviction when many solid advantages were attached to the prize of her love, and when he was ill, and penitent, and maudlin, and the calm affection of a saint seemed to him infinitely preferable to the vehement passion of a sinner,--yet when Isaura was only Isaura by

herself--Isaura minus all the *_et cetera_* which had previously been taken into account--the want of adoration for himself very much lessened her value.

Still, though he acquiesced in the delayed fulfilment of the engagement with Isaura, he had no thought of withdrawing from the engagement itself, and after a slight pause he replied: "You do me great injustice if you suppose that the occupations to which I devote myself render me less sensible to the merits of Mademoiselle Cicogna, or less eager for our union. On the contrary, I will confide to you--as a man of the world--one main reason why I quitted my father's house, and why I desire to keep my present address a secret. Mademoiselle Caumartin conceived for me a passion--a caprice--which was very flattering for a time, but which latterly became very troublesome. Figure to yourself--she daily came to our house while I was lying ill, and with the greatest difficulty my mother got her out of it. That was not all. She pestered me with letters containing all sorts of threats--nay, actually kept watch at the house; and one day when I entered the carriage with my mother and Signora Venosta for a drive in the Bois (meaning to call for Isaura by the way), she darted to the carriage-door, caught my hand, and would have made a scene if the coachman had given her leave to do so. Luckily he had the tact to whip on his horses, and we escaped. I had some little difficulty in convincing the Signora Venosta that the girl was crazed. But I felt the danger I incurred of her coming upon me some moment when in company with Isaura, and so I left my father's house; and naturally wishing to steer clear of this vehement little demon till I am safely married, I keep my address a secret from all who are likely to tell her of it."

"You do wisely if you are really afraid of her, and cannot trust your nerves to say to her plainly, 'I am engaged to be married; all is at an end between us. Do not force me to employ the police to protect myself from unwelcome importunities.'"

"Honestly speaking, I doubt if I have the nerve to do that, and I doubt still more if it would be of any avail. It is very *_ennuyant_* to be so passionately loved; but, *_que voulez vous_*? It is my fate."

"Poor martyr! I condole with you: and, to say truth, it was chiefly to warn you of Mademoiselle Caumartin's pertinacity that I call this evening."

Here Savarin related the particulars of his *_rencontre_* with Julie, and concluded by saying: "I suppose I may take your word of honour that you will firmly resist all temptation to renew a connection which would be so incompatible with the respect due to your fiancée? Fatherless and protectorless as Isaura is, I feel bound to act as a virtual guardian to one in whom my wife takes so deep an interest, and to whom, as she thinks, she had some hand in bringing about your engagement: she is committed to no small responsibilities. Do not allow poor Julie, whom I sincerely pity, to force on me the unpleasant duty of warning your fiancée of the dangers to which she might be subjected by marriage with an Adonis whose fate it is to be so profoundly beloved by the sex in general, and ballet nymphs in particular."

"There is no chance of so disagreeable a duty being incumbent on you, M. Savarin. Of course, what I myself have told you in confidence is sacred."

"Certainly. There are things in the life of a *_garçon_* before marriage

which would be an affront to the modesty of his _fiancee_ to communicate and discuss. But then those things must belong exclusively to the past and cast no shadow over the future. I will not interrupt you further. No doubt you have work for the night before you. Do the Red journalists for whom you write pay enough to support you in these terribly dear times?"

"Scarcely. But I look forward to wealth and fame in the future. And you?"

"I just escape starvation. If the siege last much longer, it is not of the gout I shall die. Good-night to you."

CHAPTER XVI.

Isaura had, as we have seen, been hitherto saved by the siege and its consequences from the fulfilment of her engagement to Gustave Rameau; and since he had quitted his father's house she had not only seen less of him, but a certain chill crept into his converse in the visits he paid to her. The compassionate feeling his illness had excited, confirmed by the unwonted gentleness of his mood, and the short-lived remorse with which he spoke of his past faults and follies, necessarily faded away in proportion as he regained that kind of febrile strength which was his normal state of health, and with it the arrogant self-assertion which was ingrained in his character. But it was now more than ever that she became aware of the antagonism between all that constituted his inner life and her own. It was not that he volunteered in her presence the express utterance of those opinions, social or religious, which he addressed to the public in the truculent journal to which, under a _nom de plume_, he was the most inflammatory contributor. Whether it was that he shrank from insulting the ears of the pure virgin whom he had wooed as wife with avowals of his disdain of marriage bonds, or perhaps from shocking yet more her womanly humanity and her religious faith by cries for the blood of anti-republican traitors and the downfall of Christian altars; or whether he yet clung, though with relapsing affection, to the hold which her promise had imposed on him, and felt that that hold would be for ever gone, and that she would recoil from his side in terror and dismay, if she once learned that the man who had implored her to be his saving angel from the comparatively mild errors of youth, had so belied his assurance, so mocked her credulity, as deliberately to enter into active warfare against all that he knew her sentiments regarded as noble and her conscience received as divine: despite the suppression of avowed doctrine on his part, the total want of sympathy between these antagonistic natures made itself felt by both--more promptly felt by Isaura. If Gustave did not frankly announce to her in that terrible time (when all that a little later broke out on the side of the Communists was more or less forcing ominous way to the lips of those who talked with confidence to each other, whether to approve or to condemn) the associates with whom he was leagued, the path to which he had committed his career--still for her instincts for genuine Art--which for its development needs the serenity of peace, which for its ideal needs dreams that soar into the Infinite--Gustave had only the scornful sneer of the man who identifies with his ambition the violent upset of all that civilisation has established in this world, and the blank negation of all that patient hope and heroic aspiration which humanity carries on into the next.

On his side, Gustave Rameau, who was not without certain fine and delicate attributes in a complicated nature over which the personal vanity and the mobile temperament of the Parisian reigned supreme, chafed at the restraints imposed on him. No matter what a man's doctrines may be--however abominable you and I may deem them--man desires to find, in the dearest fellowship he can establish, that sympathy in the woman his choice singles out from her sex-deference to his opinions, sympathy with his objects, as man. So, too, Gustave's sense of honour and according to his own Parisian code that sense was keen--became exquisitely stung by the thought that he was compelled to play the part of a mean dissimulator to the girl for whose opinions he had the profoundest contempt. How could these two, betrothed to each other, not feel, though without coming to open dissension, that between them had flowed the inlet of water by which they had been riven asunder? What man, if he can imagine himself a Gustave Rameau, can blame the revolutionist absorbed in ambitious projects for turning the pyramid of society topsy-turvy, if he shrank more and more from the companionship of a betrothed with whom he could not venture to exchange three words without caution and reserve? And what woman can blame an Isaura if she felt a sensation of relief at the very neglect of the affianced whom she had compassionated and could never love?

Possibly the reader may best judge of the state of Isaura's mind at this time by a few brief extracts from an imperfect fragmentary journal, in which, amid saddened and lonely hours, she held converse with herself.

"One day at Enghien I listened silently to a conversation between M. Savarin and the Englishman, who sought to explain the conception of duty in which the German poet has given such noble utterance to the thoughts of the German philosopher--viz., that moral aspiration has the same goal as the artistic--the attainment to the calm delight wherein the pain of effort disappears in the content of achievement. Thus in life, as in art, it is through discipline that we arrive at freedom, and duty only completes itself when all motives, all actions, are attuned into one harmonious whole, and it is not striven for as duty, but enjoyed as happiness. M. Savarin treated this theory with the mockery with which the French wit is ever apt to treat what it terms German mysticism. According to him, duty must always be a hard and difficult struggle; and he said laughingly, 'Whenever a man says, "I have done my duty," it is with a long face and a mournful sigh.'

"Ah, how devoutly I listened to the Englishman! how harshly the Frenchman's irony jarred upon my ears! And yet now, in the duty that life imposes on me, to fulfil which I strain every power vouchsafed to my nature, and seek to crush down every impulse that rebels, where is the promised calm, where any approach to the content of achievement? Contemplating the way before me, the Beautiful even of Art has vanished. I see but cloud and desert. Can this which I assume to be duty really be so? Ah, is it not sin even to ask my heart that question?

"Madame Rameau is very angry with her son for his neglect both of his parents and of me. I have had to take his part against her. I would not have him lose their love. Poor Gustave! But when Madame Rameau suddenly said to-day: 'I erred in seeking the union between thee and Gustave. Retract thy promise; in doing so thou wilt be justified,'--oh, the strange joy that flashed upon me as she spoke. Am I justified? Am I? Oh, if that Englishman had never crossed my path! Oh, if I had never loved! or if in the last time we met he had not asked for my love, and

confessed his own! Then, I think, I could honestly reconcile my conscience with my longings, and say to Gustave, 'We do not suit each other; be we both released!' But now-is it that Gustave is really changed from what he was, when in despondence at my own lot, and in pitying belief that I might brighten and exalt his, I plighted my troth to him? or is it not rather that the choice I thus voluntarily made became so intolerable a thought the moment I knew I was beloved and sought by another; and from that moment I lost the strength I had before,--strength to silence the voice at my own heart? What! is it the image of that other one which is persuading me to be false?--to exaggerate the failings, to be blind to the merits of him who has a right to say, 'I am what I was when thou didst pledge thyself to take me for better or for worse'?

"Gustave has been here after an absence of several days. He was not alone. The good Abbe Vertpre and Madame de Vandemar, with her son, M. Raoul, were present. They had come on matters connected with our ambulance. They do not know of my engagement to Gustave; and seeing him in the uniform of a National Guard, the Abbe courteously addressed to him some questions as to the possibility of checking the terrible increase of the vice of intoxication, so alien till of late to the habits of the Parisians, and becoming fatal to discipline and bodily endurance,--could the number of the _cantines_ on the ramparts be more limited? Gustave answered with rudeness and bitter sarcasm, 'Before priests could be critics in military matters they must undertake military service themselves.'

"The Abbe replied with unalterable good-humour, 'But, in order to criticise the effects of drunkenness, must one get drunk one's self?' Gustave was put out, and retired into a corner of the room, keeping sullen silence till my other visitors left.

"Then before I could myself express the pain his words and manner had given me, he said abruptly, 'I wonder how you can tolerate the _tartuferie_ which may amuse on the comic stage, but in the tragedy of these times is revolting.' This speech roused my anger, and the conversation that ensued was the gravest that had ever passed between us.

"If Gustave were of stronger nature and more concentrated will, I believe that the only feelings I should have for him would be antipathy and dread. But it is his very weaknesses and inconsistencies that secure to him a certain tenderness of interest. I think he could never be judged without great indulgence by women; there is in him so much of the child, --wayward, irritating one moment, and the next penitent, affectionate. One feels as if persistence in evil were impossible to one so delicate both in mind and form. That peculiar order of genius to which he belongs seems as if it ought to be so estranged from all directions, violent or coarse. When in poetry he seeks to utter some audacious and defying sentiment, the substance melts away in daintiness of expression, in soft, lute-like strains of slender music. And when he has stung, angered, revolted my heart the most, suddenly he subsides into such pathetic gentleness, such tearful remorse, that I feel as if resentment to one so helpless, desertion of one who must fall without the support of a friendly hand, were a selfish cruelty. It seems to me as if I were dragged towards a precipice by a sickly child clinging to my robe.

"But in this last conversation with him, his language in regard to subjects I hold most sacred drew forth from me words which startled him, and which may avail to save him from that worst insanity of human minds,

--the mimicry of the Titans who would have dethroned a God to restore a Chaos. I told him frankly that I had only promised to share his fate on my faith in his assurance of my power to guide it heavenward; and that if the opinions he announced were seriously entertained, and put forth in defiance of heaven itself, we were separated for ever. I told him how earnestly, in the calamities of the time, my own soul had sought to take refuge in thoughts and hopes beyond the earth; and how deeply many a sentiment that in former days passed by me with a smile in the light talk of the salons, now shocked me as an outrage on the reverence which the mortal child owes to the Divine Father. I owed to him how much of comfort, of sustainment, of thought and aspiration, elevated beyond the sphere of Art in which I had hitherto sought the purest air, the loftiest goal, I owed to intercourse with minds like those of the Abbe de Vertpre; and how painfully I felt as if I were guilty of ingratitude when he compelled me to listen to insults on those whom I recognised as benefactors.

"I wished to speak sternly; but it is my great misfortune, my prevalent weakness, that I cannot be stern when I ought to be. It is with me in life as in art. I never could on the stage have taken the part of a Norma or a Medea. If I attempt in fiction a character which deserves condemnation, I am untrue to poetic justice. I cannot condemn and execute; I can but compassionate and pardon the creature I myself have created. I was never in the real world stern but to one; and then, alas! it was because I loved where I could no longer love with honour; and I, knowing my weakness, had terror lest I should yield.

"So Gustave did not comprehend from my voice, my manner, how gravely I was in earnest. But, himself softened, affected to tears, he confessed his own faults--ceased to argue in order to praise; and--and--uttering protestations seemingly the most sincere, he left me bound to him still --bound to him still--woe is me!"

It is true that Isaura had come more directly under the influence of religion than she had been in the earlier dates of this narrative. There is a time in the lives of most of us, and especially in the lives of women, when, despondent of all joy in an earthly future, and tortured by conflicts between inclination and duty, we transfer all the passion and fervour of our troubled souls to enthusiastic yearnings for the Divine Love; seeking to rebaptise ourselves in the fountain of its mercy, taking thence the only hopes that can cheer, the only strength that can sustain us. Such a time had come to Isaura. Formerly she had escaped from the griefs of the work-a-day world into the garden-land of Art. Now, Art had grown unwelcome to her, almost hateful. Gone was the spell from the garden-land; its flowers were faded, its paths were stony, its sunshine had vanished in mist and rain. There are two voices of Nature in the soul of the genuine artist,--that is, of him who, because he can create, comprehends the necessity of the great Creator. Those voices are never both silent. When one is hushed, the other becomes distinctly audible. The one speaks to him of Art, the other of Religion.

At that period several societies for the relief and tendance of the wounded had been formed by the women of Paris,--the earliest, if I mistake not, by ladies of the highest rank--amongst whom were the Comtesse de Vandemar and the Contessa di Rimini--though it necessarily included others of stations less elevated. To this society, at the request of Alain de Rochebriant and of Enguerrand, Isaura had eagerly attached herself. It occupied much of her time; and in connection with it she was brought much into sympathetic acquaintance with Raoul de

Vandemar--the most zealous and active member of that Society of St. Francois de Sales, to which belonged other young nobles of the Legitimist creed. The passion of Raoul's life was the relief of human suffering. In him was personified the ideal of Christian charity. I think all, or most of us, have known what it is to pass under the influence of a nature that is so far akin to ours that it desires to become something better and higher than it is--that desire being paramount in ourselves--but seeks to be that something in ways not akin to, but remote from, the ways in which we seek it. When this contact happens, either one nature, by the mere force of will, subjugates and absorbs the other, or both, while preserving their own individuality, apart and independent, enrich themselves by mutual interchange, and the asperities which differences of taste and sentiment in detail might otherwise provoke melt in the sympathy which unites spirits striving with equal earnestness to rise nearer to the unseen and unattainable Source, which they equally recognise as Divine.

Perhaps, had these two persons met a year ago in the ordinary intercourse of the world, neither would have detected the sympathy of which I speak. Raoul was not without the prejudice against artists and writers of romance, that is shared by many who cherish the persuasion that all is vanity which does not concentrate imagination and intellect in the destinies of the soul hereafter; and Isaura might have excited his compassion, certainly not his reverence. While to her, his views on all that seeks to render the actual life attractive and embellished, through the accomplishments of Muse and Grace, would have seemed the narrow-minded asceticism of a bigot. But now, amid the direful calamities of the time, the beauty of both natures became visible to each. To the eyes of Isaura tenderness became predominant in the monastic self-denial of Raoul. To the eyes of Raoul, devotion became predominant in the gentle thoughtfulness of Isaura. Their intercourse was in ambulance and hospital--in care for the wounded, in prayer for the dying. Ah! it is easy to declaim against the frivolities and vices of Parisian society as they appear on the surface; and, in revolutionary times, it is the very worst of Paris that ascends in scum to the top. But descend below the surface, even in that demoralising suspense of order, and nowhere on earth might the angel have beheld the image of humanity more amply vindicating its claim to the heritage of heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

The warning announcement of some great effort on the part of the besieged, which Alain had given to Lemercier, was soon to be fulfilled.

For some days the principal thoroughfares were ominously lined with military convois. The loungers on the Boulevards stopped to gaze on the long defiles of troops and cannons, commissariat conveyances, and, saddening accompaniments! the vehicles of various ambulances for the removal of the wounded. With what glee the loungers said to each other "Enfin!" Among all the troops that Paris sent forth, none were so popular as those which Paris had not nurtured--the sailors. From the moment they arrived, the sailors had been the pets of the capital. They soon proved themselves the most notable contrast to that force which Paris herself had produced--the National Guard. Their frames were hardy, their habits active, their discipline perfect, their manners mild and polite. "Oh, if all our troops were like these!" was the common

exclamation of the Parisians.

At last burst forth upon Paris the proclamations of General Trochu and General Ducrot; the first brief, calm, and Breton-like, ending with "Putting our trust in God. March on for our country:" the second more detailed, more candidly stating obstacles and difficulties, but fiery with eloquent enthusiasm, not unsupported by military statistics, in the 400 cannon, two-thirds of which were of the largest calibre, that no material object could resist; more than 150,000 soldiers, all well armed, well equipped, abundantly provided with munitions, and all (*l'en a l'espoir*) animated by an irresistible ardour. "For me," concludes the General, "I am resolved. I swear before you, before the whole nation, that I will not re-enter Paris except as dead or victorious."

At these proclamations, who then at Paris does not recall the burst of enthusiasm that stirred the surface? Trochu became once more popular; even the Communistic or atheistic journals refrained from complaining that he attended mass, and invited his countrymen to trust in God. Ducrot was more than popular--he was adored.

The several companies in which De Mauleon and Enguerrand served departed towards their post early on the same morning, that of the 28th. All the previous night, while Enguerrand was buried in profound slumber, Raoul remained in his brother's room; sometimes on his knees before the ivory crucifix which had been their mother's last birthday gift to her youngest son--sometimes seated beside the bed in profound and devout meditation. At daybreak, Madame de Vandemar stole into the chamber. Unconscious of his brother's watch, he had asked her to wake him in good time, for the young man was a sound sleeper. Shading the candle she bore with one hand, with the other she drew aside the curtain, and looked at Enguerrand's calm fair face, its lips parted in the happy smile which seemed to carry joy with it wherever its sunshine played. Her tears fell noiselessly on her darling's cheek; she then knelt down and prayed for strength. As she rose she felt Raoul's arm around her; they looked at each other in silence; then she bowed her head and wakened Enguerrand with her lips. "*Pas de querelle, mes amis*," he murmured, opening his sweet blue eyes drowsily. "Ah, it was a dream! I thought Jules and Emile [two young friends of his] were worrying each other; and you know, dear Raoul, that I am the most officious of peacemakers. Time to rise, is it? No peacemaking to-day. Kiss me again, mother, and say 'Bless thee.'"

"Bless thee, bless thee, my child," cried the mother, wrapping her arms passionately round him, and in tones choked with sobs.

"Now leave me, *maman*," said Enguerrand, resorting to the infantine ordinary name, which he had not used for years. "Raoul, stay and help me to dress. I must be *tres beau* to-day. I shall join thee at breakfast, *maman*. Early for such repast, but *l'appetit vient en mangeant*. Mind the coffee is hot."

Enguerrand, always careful of each detail of dress, was especially so that morning, and especially gay, humming the old air, "*Partant pour la Syrie*." But his gaiety was checked when Raoul, taking from his breast a holy talisman, which he habitually wore there, suspended it with loving hands round his brother's neck. It was a small crystal set in Byzantine filigree; imbedded in it was a small splinter of wood, said by pious tradition to be a relic of the Divine Cross. It had been for centuries in the family of the Contessa di Rimini, and was given by her to Raoul,

the only gift she had ever made him, as an emblem of the sinless purity of the affection that united those two souls in the bonds of the beautiful belief.

"She bade me transfer it to thee to-day, my brother," said Raoul, simply; "and now without a pang I can gird on thee thy soldier's sword."

Enguerrand clasped his brother in his arms, and kissed him with passionate fervour. "Oh, Raoul, how I love thee! how good thou hast ever been to me! how many sins thou hast saved me from! how indulgent thou hast been to those from which thou couldst not save! Think on that, my brother, in case we do not meet again on earth."

"Hush, hush, Enguerrand! No gloomy forebodings now! Come, come hither, my half of life, my sunny half of life!" and uttering these words, he led Enguerrand towards the crucifix, and there, in deeper and more solemn voice, said, "Let us pray." So the brothers knelt side by side, and Raoul prayed aloud as only such souls can pray.

When they descended into the salon where breakfast was set out, they found assembled several of their relations, and some of Enguerrand's young friends not engaged in the sortie. One or two of the latter, indeed, were disabled from fighting by wounds in former fields; they left their sick-beds to bid him good-bye. Unspeakable was the affection this genial nature inspired in all who came into the circle of its winning magic; and when, tearing himself from them, he descended the stair, and passed with light step through the *Porte cochere*, there was a crowd around the house--so widely had his popularity spread among even the lower classes, from which the *Mobiles* in his regiment were chiefly composed. He departed to the place of rendezvous amid a chorus of exhilarating cheers.

Not thus lovingly tended on, not thus cordially greeted, was that equal idol of a former generation, Victor de Mauleon. No pious friend prayed beside his couch, no loving kiss waked him from his slumbers. At the grey of the November dawn he rose from a sleep which had no smiling dreams, with that mysterious instinct of punctual will which cannot even go to sleep without fixing beforehand the exact moment in which sleep shall end. He, too, like Enguerrand, dressed himself with care--unlike Enguerrand, with care strictly soldier-like. Then, seeing he had some little time yet before him, he rapidly revisited the pigeonholes and drawers in which might be found by prying eyes anything he would deny to them curiosity. All that he found of this sort were some letters in female handwriting, tied together with faded ribbon, relics of earlier days, and treasured throughout later vicissitudes; letters from the English girl to whom he had briefly referred in his confession to Louvier--the only girl he had ever wooed as his wife. She was the only daughter of highborn Roman Catholics, residing at the time of his youth in Paris. Reluctantly they had assented to his proposals; joyfully they had retracted their assent when his affairs had become so involved; yet possibly the motive that led him to his most ruinous excesses--the gambling of the turf--had been caused by the wild hope of a nature, then fatally sanguine, to retrieve the fortune that might suffice to satisfy the parents. But during his permitted courtship the lovers had corresponded. Her letters were full of warm, if innocent, tenderness--till came the last cold farewell. The family had long ago returned to England; he concluded, of course, that she had married another.

Near to these letters lay the papers which had served to vindicate his

honour in that old affair, in which the unsought love of another had brought on him shame and affliction. As his eye fell on the last, he muttered to him self, "I kept these, to clear my repute. Can I keep those, when, if found, they might compromise the repute of her who might have been my wife had I been worthy of her? She is doubtless now another's; or, if dead,--honour never dies." He pressed his lips to the letters with a passionate, lingering, mournful kiss; then, raking up the ashes of yesterday's fire, and rekindling them, he placed thereon those leaves of a melancholy romance in his past, and watched them slowly, reluctantly smoulder away into tinder. Then he opened a drawer in which lay the only paper of a political character which he had preserved. All that related to plots or conspiracies in which his agency had committed others, it was his habit to destroy as soon as received. For the sole document thus treasured he alone was responsible; it was an outline of his ideal for the future constitution of France, accompanied with elaborate arguments, the heads of which his conversation with the Incognito made known to the reader. Of the soundness of this political programme, whatever its merits or faults (a question on which I presume no judgment), he had an intense conviction. He glanced rapidly over its contents, did not alter a word, sealed it up in an envelope, inscribed, "My Legacy to my Countrymen." The papers refuting a calumny relating solely to himself he carried into the battle-field, placed next to his heart,--significant of a Frenchman's love of honour in this world--as the relic placed round the neck of Enguerrand by his pious brother was emblematic of the Christian hope of mercy in the next.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The streets swarmed with the populace troops as they passed to their destination. Among those of the Mobiles who especially caught the eye were two companies in which Enguerrand de Vandemar and Victor de Mauleon commanded. In the first were many young men of good family, or in the higher ranks of the bourgeoisie, known to numerous lookers-on; there was something inspiriting in their gay aspects, and in the easy carelessness of their march. Mixed with this company, however, and forming of course the bulk of it, were those who belonged to the lower classes of the population; and though they too might seem gay to an ordinary observer, the gaiety was forced. Many of them were evidently not quite sober; and there was a disorderly want of soldiership in their mien and armament which inspired distrust among such vieux moustaches as, too old for other service than that of the ramparts, mixed here and there among the crowd.

But when De Mauleon's company passed, the _vieux moustaches_ impulsively touched each other. They recognised the march of well-drilled men; the countenances grave and severe, the eyes not looking on this side and that for admiration, the step regularly timed; and conspicuous among these men the tall stature and calm front of the leader.

"These fellows will fight well," growled a _vieux moustache_, "where did they fish out their leader?"

"Don't you know?" said a bourgeois_. "Victor de Mauleon. He won the cross in Algeria for bravery. I recollect him when I was very young; the very devil for women and fighting."

"I wish there were more such devils for fighting and fewer for women," growled again *_le vieux moustache_*.

One incessant roar of cannon all the night of the 29th. The populace had learned the names of the French cannons, and fancied they could distinguish the several sounds of their thunder. "There spits 'Josephine!'" shouts an invalid sailor. "There howls our own 'Populace!'" cries a Red Republican from Belleville.

[The "Populace" had been contributed to the artillery, *_sou d sou_*, by the working class.]

"There sings 'Le Chatiment!'" laughed Gustave Rameau, who was now become an enthusiastic admirer of the Victor Hugo he had before affected to despise. And all the while, mingled with the roar of the cannon, came, far and near from the streets, from the ramparts, the gusts of song--song sometimes heroic, sometimes obscene, more often carelessly joyous. The news of General Vinoy's success during the early part of the day had been damped by the evening report of Ducrot's delay in crossing the swollen Marne. But the spirits of the Parisians rallied from a momentary depression on the excitement at night of that concert of martial music.

During that night, close under the guns of the double redoubt of Gravelle and La Faisanderie, eight pontoon-bridges were thrown over the Marne; and at daybreak the first column of the third army under Blanchard and Renoult crossed with all their artillery, and, covered by the fire of the double redoubts, of the forts of Vincennes, Nogent, Rossuey, and the batteries of Mont Avron, had an hour before noon carried the village of Champigny, and the first echelon of the important plateau of Villiers, and were already commencing the work of intrenchment, when, rallying from the amaze of a defeat, the German forces burst upon them, sustained by fresh batteries. The Prussian pieces of artillery established at Chennevieres and at Neuilly opened fire with deadly execution; while a numerous infantry, descending from the intrenchments of Villiers, charged upon the troops under Renoult. Among the French in that strife were Enguerrand and the Mobiles of which he was in command. Dismayed by the unexpected fire, these Mobiles gave way, as indeed did many of the line. Enguerrand rushed forward to the front: "On, *_mes enfans_*, on! What will our mothers and wives say of us if we fly? *_Vive la France_!*--On!" Among those of the better class in that company there rose a shout of applause, but it found no sympathy among the rest. They wavered, they turned. "Will you suffer me to go on alone, countrymen?" cried Enguerrand; and alone he rushed on towards the Prussian line--rushed, and fell, mortally wounded, by a musket-ball. "Revenge, revenge!" shouted some of the foremost; "Revenge!" shouted those in the rear; and, so shouting, turned on their heels and fled. But ere they could disperse they encountered the march, steadfast though rapid, of the troop led by Victor de Mauleon. "Poltroons!" he thundered, with the sonorous depth of his strong voice, "halt and turn, or my men shall fire on you as deserters."

"Va, citoyen," said one fugitive, an officer--popularly elected, because he was the loudest brawler in the club of the Salle Favre,--we have seen him before--Charles, the brother of Armand Monnier;--"men can't fight when they despise their generals. It is our generals who are poltroons and fools both."

"Carry my answer to the ghosts of cowards," cried De Mauldon, and shot the man dead.

His followers, startled and cowed by the deed, and the voice and the look of the death-giver, halted. The officers, who had at first yielded to the panic of their men, took fresh courage, and finally led the bulk of the troop back to their, post "enlevés à la baïonnette," to use the phrase of a candid historian of that day.

Day, on the whole, not inglorious to France. It was the first, if it was the last, really important success of the besieged. They remained masters of the ground, the Prussians leaving to them the wounded and the dead.

That night what crowds thronged from Paris to the top of the Montmartre heights, from the observatory on which the celebrated inventor Bazin had lighted up, with some magical electric machine, all the plain of Gennevilliers from Mont Valerien to the Fort de la Briche! The splendour of the blaze wrapped the great city;--distinctly above the roofs of the houses soared the Dome des Invalides, the spires of Notre Dame, the giant turrets of the Tuileries;--and died away on resting on the _infames scapulos Acroceraunia_, the "thunder crags" of the heights occupied by the invading army.

Lemercier, De Breze, and the elder Rameau--who, despite his peaceful habits and grey hairs, insisted on joining in the aid of _la patrie_--were among the National Guards attached to the Fort de la Briche and the neighbouring eminence, and they met in conversation.

"What a victory we have had!" said the old Rameau.

"Rather mortifying to your son, M. Rameau," said LeMercier.

"Mortifying to my son, sir!--the victory of his countrymen. What do you mean?"

"I had the honour to hear M. Gustave the other night at the club de la Vengeance."

"Bon Dieu! do you frequent those tragic reunions?" asked De Breze.

"They are not at all tragic: they are the only comedies left us, as one must amuse one's self somewhere, and the club de la Vengeance is the prettiest thing of the sort going. I quite understand why it should fascinate a poet like your son, M. Rameau. It is held in a _salle de café chantant_--style _Louis Quinze_--decorated with a pastoral scene from Watteau. I and my dog Fox drop in. We hear your son haranguing. In what poetical sentences he despaired of the Republic! The Government (he called them _les charlatans de l'Hotel de Ville_) were imbeciles. They pretended to inaugurate a revolution, and did not employ the most obvious of revolutionary means. There Fox and I pricked up our ears: what were those means? Your son proceeded to explain: 'All mankind were to be appealed to against individual interests. The commerce of luxury was to be abolished. Clearly luxury was not at the command of all mankind. Cafés and theatres were to be closed for ever--all mankind could not go to cafés and theatres. It was idle to expect the masses to combine for anything in which the masses had not an interest in common. The masses had no interest in any property that did not belong to the masses. Programmes of the society to be founded, called the Ligue Cosmopolite Democratique, should be sent at once into all the States of the civilised world--how? by balloons. Money corrupts the world as now

composed: but the money at the command of the masses could buy all the monarchs and courtiers and priests of the universe.' At that sentiment, vehemently delivered, the applauses were frantic, and Fox in his excitement began to bark. At the sound of his bark one man cried out, 'That's a Prussian!' another, 'Down with the spy!' another, 'There's an aristo present--he keeps alive a dog which would be a week's meal for a family!' I snatch up Fox at the last cry, and clasp him to a bosom protected by the uniform of the National Guard.

"When the hubbub had subsided, your son, M. Rameau, proceeded, quitting mankind in general, and arriving at the question in particular most interesting to his audience--the mobilisation of the National Guard; that is, the call upon men who like talking and hate fighting to talk less and fight more. 'It was the sheerest tyranny to select a certain number of free citizens to be butchered. If the fight was for the mass, there ought to be *la levee en masse*. If one did not compel everybody to fight, why should anybody fight?' Here the applause again became vehement, and Fox again became indiscreet. I subdued Fox's bark into a squeak by pulling his ears. 'What!' cries your poet-son, '*la levee en masse* gives us fifteen millions of soldiers, with which we could crush, not Prussia alone, but the whole of Europe. (Immense sensation.) Let us, then, resolve that the charlatans of the *Hotel de Ville* are incapable of delivering us from the Prussians; that they are deposed; that the *Ligue* of the *Democratie Cosmopolite* is installed; that meanwhile the Commune shall be voted the Provisional Government, and shall order the Prussians to retire within three days from the soil of Paris.'

"Pardon me this long description, my dear M. Rameau, but I trust I have satisfactorily explained why victory obtained in the teeth of his eloquent opinions, if gratifying to him as a Frenchman, must be mortifying to him as a politician."

The old Rameau sighed, hung his head, and crept away. While, amid this holiday illumination, the Parisians enjoyed the panorama before them, the *Freres Chretiens* and the attendants of the various ambulances were moving along the battle-plains; the first in their large-brimmed hats and sable garbs, the last in strange motley costume, many of them in glittering uniform--all alike in their serene indifference to danger; often pausing to pick up among the dead their own brethren who had been slaughtered in the midst of their task. Now and then they came on sinister forms apparently engaged in the same duty of tending the wounded and dead, but in truth murderous plunderers, to whom the dead and the dying were equal harvests. Did the wounded man attempt to resist the foul hands searching for their spoil, they added another wound more immediately mortal, grinning as they completed on the dead the robbery they had commenced on the dying.

Raoul de Vandemar had been all the earlier part of the day with the assistants of the ambulance over which he presided, attached to the battalions of the National Guard in a quarter remote from that in which his brother had fought and fallen. When those troops, later in the day, were driven from the Montmedy plateau, which they had at first carried, Raoul repassed towards the plateau at Villiers, on which the dead lay thickest. On the way he heard a vague report of the panic which had dispersed the Mobiles of whom Enguerrand was in command, and of Enguerrand's vain attempt to inspirit them. But his fate was not known. There, at midnight, Raoul is still searching among the ghastly heaps and pools of blood, lighted from afar by the blaze from the observatory of

Montmartre, and more near at hand by the bivouac fires extended along the banks to the left of the Marne, while everywhere about the field flitted the lanterns of the _Frere Chretiens_. Suddenly, in the dimness of a spot cast into shadow by an incomplected earthwork, he observed a small sinister figure perched on the breast of some wounded soldier, evidently not to succour. He sprang forward and seized a hideous-looking urchin, scarcely twelve years old, who held in one hand a small crystal locket, set in filigree gold, torn from the soldier's breast, and lifted high in the other a long case-knife. At a glance Raoul recognised the holy relic he had given to Enguerrand, and, flinging the precocious murderer to be seized by his assistants, he cast himself beside his brother. Enguerrand still breathed, and his languid eyes brightened as he knew the dear familiar face. He tried to speak, but his voice failed, and he shook his head sadly, but still with a faint smile on his lips. They lifted him tenderly, and placed him on a litter. The movement, gentle as it was, brought back pain, and with the pain strength to mutter, "My mother ---I would see her once more."

As at daybreak the loungers on Montmartre and the ramparts descended into the streets--most windows in which were open, as they had been all night, with anxious female faces peering palely down--they saw the conveyances of the ambulances coming dismally along, and many an eye turned wistfully towards the litter on which lay the idol of the pleasure-loving Paris, with the dark, bareheaded figure walking beside it,--onwards, onwards, till it reached the Hotel de Vandemar, and a woman's cry was heard at the entrance--the mother's cry, "My son! my son!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE PARISIANS, B11, LYTTON ***

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